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ABSTRACT

Concern about boys' education in Australia and New Zealand led to the Leadership in Boys' Education Conference in May 1999. This book contains edited conference presentations focusing on boys' educational needs. The book also presents case studies related to academic achievement, school structure, discipline and bullying, broadening boys' options, and building support. The chapters are: (1) "Leading Boy-Friendly Schools" (Steve Biddulph); (2) "Educating Boys, Emotional Literacy, and the Workplace" (Don Edgar); (3) "Leadership on the Ground" (Richard Fletcher); (4) "Aboriginal Cultural Programs and Interagency Co-Operation in Boys Strategies" (Jenni Griffiths); (5) "Pastoral Care at St. Ignatius' College, Riverview" (Peter Ireland); (6) "A Decade of Working Consistently at Boys' Education" (Fred Carosi); (7) "Role Models and School Support Structures for Rural Boys" (Helene Boyer); (8) "Empowering Boys" (Ian Lillico); (9) "Boys-Only English Classes at Cherrybrook Technology High" (Lyn Wendtman); (10) "The Boys Action Team as Part of Whole School Improvement" (Beverley Theobald); (11) "Crossing Gender Boundaries" (Chris Bonner); (12) "Changing the Football Culture" (John Craig, Tina Barnier, and Ian Beasley); (13) "Raising the Self-Esteem of Boys through Skill Development" (Bill Campbell); (14) "Engaging Fathers and the Whole Community in the Education of Rural Boys" (Cheryl Hallinan); (15) "The Role of the Principal in Facilitating Change in the Curriculum and School Culture" (James White); (16) "Individual Programs for Disaffected Boys" (John McKenna); (17) "School, Community, and Regional Support" (Shona McKinlay); (18) "Supporting Fathers To Be Good Fathers" (Andrew Mullins); and (19) "Fathers' Role in Quality Learning for Boys" (Phil Bretherton). (KB)

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Leadership in Boys' Education

STEVE BIDDULPH
DON EDGAR
RICHARD FLETCHER

PS 028597

16 case studies from public and private, rural and urban, primary and secondary schools

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Raising Boys' Achievement
School Structure and Strategy
Discipline, Welfare and Bullying
Broadening Boys' Options
Building Support for Boys' Initiatives

Edited by Richard Fletcher, Deborah Hartman and Rollo Browne

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LEADERSHIP IN BOYS' EDUCATION

Edited By

Richard Fletcher
Deborah Hartman
Rollo Browne

Printed by
Lloyd Scott Printery

LEADERSHIP IN BOYS' EDUCATION

About the Editors

Richard Fletcher has taught in secondary schools in Australia, Kenya and The United States. Since January 1996, Richard has been the Manager of the Men and Boys' Program of the Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle. He has presented seminars to schools across Australia and was the Convenor of the *Leadership in Boys' Education National Forum*.

Deborah Hartman has been an educator for over twenty years. She has taught primary aged children in Queensland, NSW and the Northern Territory, where she worked as a teacher, teacher educator and curriculum developer with Aboriginal communities. Deborah is a mother of two fine young men in training and has an interest in the care and education of boys both as a teacher and a parent. She recently joined the Men and Boys' Program at the Family Action Centre to research women's work with boys.

Rollo Browne is a consultant to schools in several states and has worked with teachers across a range of boys' initiatives. As well as advising on program design and providing staff seminars, Rollo has assisted schools', developing whole school approaches to improving boys' social and academic outcomes. Rollo presented active learning methods at the National Forum

Leadership in Boys' Education

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Acknowledgments

The impetus for this book came from the Leadership in Boys' Education National Forum held in Newcastle in May 1999. The editors would like to thank all the contributors for their thoughtful offerings, both in their keynote addresses and case studies at the conference, and in the book. We would also like to thank all the participants in the Leadership in Boys' Education National Forum who helped to make it such a success.

The production of this book was made possible by the hard work of Suzanne Mayes and Gaylene Kennedy of the Men and Boys' Program, Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle. Design was provided by Media Design, Production and Publications (IESD) at the University of Newcastle.

We would like to pay tribute to the dedicated ground-work in boys' education currently being carried out by School Principals, Deputy Principals, Teachers and other staff in schools throughout Australia. It is this work which is laying the foundation for future generations of boys to go well in school and in life.

Cover photographs are taken from the *Being a Man* Photopak
produced by the Men and Boys Program

Preface

Last Friday evening, my husband and I had dinner with a friend of ours who's a leading teacher at one of our local Newcastle High Schools. I asked 'What's happening for boys in schools these days?' And it unleashed an hour of angst and deeply, deeply disturbed conversation. These are some of the things that he said. The boys have lost the plot. The girls have got their act together. They cooperate and they want to learn. My Year 10 boys think that sex, drugs and alcohol are the be all and end all. The boys don't want to play to any rules. They want disruption and anarchy. It's all underpinned with violence. There's a, 'if you don't like it, smash it' mentality. The girls complain constantly about the disruption in the classroom, where they want to learn and the boys just want to be dead shits. And he followed that with story after story after story that left us feeling that this is a true tragedy. He also mentioned that a female teacher at that school had recently taken out an AVO (Apprehended Violence Order) against a male student.

Now this is probably no surprise to many people working with boys. We all know that boys are being held back by irrational attitudes and conventions. We all know that boys are losing their way. We know that they're embracing physical aggression, violence and brutal competitiveness as a way of being. Yet we also know that there are dimensions of boys which are worth developing. We know that there is a suppressed rage in boys in schools. And we know that they'll carry this beyond their schooling into manhood. Boys seem to have fewer tools somehow to deal with the more subtle emotions. It's a very complex and bewildering thing to be a young man facing the new millenium.

There's a great deal of anxiety and awareness and concern out there about the issues of boy's education. There's also a great willingness for people who are leaders in the field to come together and seek some positive solutions. This book is a practical demonstration of this willingness.

The Family Action Centre has been applying creative, innovative solutions to areas of need in the community for over a decade now. Traditionally our focus has been on the family and women and children. But about seven years ago we began to look quite closely at what was happening for men. And we recognised that what was happening for men had a great impact, an inevitable impact on the wellbeing of the family and the children. We started to ask ourselves the really hard questions like 'What can we do about this? What kinds of programs can we put in place, how can we address men's role in the family?' And back in those days it was very, very difficult to recruit male field workers for our various programs. Many of our programs have a volunteer base, and it was also difficult to recruit male volunteers. We continued to seek solutions and out of this situation grew the Men and Boys' Program. So over the last few years Richard Fletcher has been conducting workshops and seminars in many, many, many towns and cities throughout Australia and he and his team have heard from literally thousands of people. And the story is always the same. There is grave concern about what's happening for boys.

At the Family Action Centre we found that what really works is gathering together like minded people, the people who are actually on the coal face, who are in daily contact with the issues. We do this so we can build on the strengths of those people, finding out what works and creating new possibilities. The conference that lead to this book, and the book itself, is a unique opportunity and an exciting opportunity for you all as leaders in the field of boy's education to really make a difference and to start creating these new possibilities. Our boys desperately need a context in which it is safe to develop their full humanity. And they need us to help make it happen.

Di James
Director - Family Action Centre

Introduction

The concern over boys education has come from three main areas: statistics on academic and social outcomes; unruly and disruptive behaviour inside and outside of school; and the recognition that we do not know what makes boys tick. Schools' responses have also been varied. In every region programs focusing on behaviours or on perceived deficit areas such as literacy, have been introduced. A variety of whole school approaches have also been tried, with mixed results. In some regions there has also been collaboration between schools to pool resources and benefit from parallel learning across school cultures.

As the level of activity has risen, the characterisation of 'the problem with boys' has changed. Early in the 1990s, boys' issues were often seen as peripheral to the main concerns of teachers. More recently, boys' learning (or not learning) has been recognised as core business for the school. As part of this shift, the statistics on boys' outcomes have been localised. The initial evidence of boys' poor academic and social achievement derived from statewide or national comparisons. While presentation of these figures served to raise the alarm about boys, the relevance to specific schools remained questionable. Schools have now documented their own student outcomes to provide convincing evidence that, by ordinary measures of school achievement, boys as a group are faring poorly.

The novelty of this situation is an advantage in raising people's awareness. Schools in recent years have found it easier to attract parents to meetings to discuss "boys learning" than to hear about "gender equity". And the media have carried numerous reports based on the "new" evidence of boys' relative failure. While teachers are clear that boys' education is not a problem created by the media, there is a risk of neglecting factors which are affecting boys learning but which are not new. Behaviours such as being disruptive in class, or preferring ball games to quiet reading, are not new. What has changed is our perception of these as "natural" qualities of boys. School communities are now noticing that the traditional discipline system, reasonable and familiar though it appears, tends to penalise one half of the school population, that is, boys. Female students, whose learning is continually interrupted while the discipline system struggles to cope with boy's behaviour, do not benefit either. This is not in any sense a new issue. But the communities' view of appropriate behaviour and of appropriate school responses has changed.

While we tend to see the latest evidence of boys' poor outcomes as the driving force for change, the true picture is more complex. A crucial factor is the recognition among significant numbers of teachers and parents that the difficulties being experienced by a particular boy are part of a broader society problem about the identity of boys and men. Many of the statistics such as those charting boys' involvement in detention and expulsion (and as young men in juvenile justice and crime), have been available for decades. It is due to our heightened awareness that "gender" issues might include boys' unmet needs, that these figures are suddenly visible.

The significance of this shift in teachers views of boys and boys' behaviour in Australia was brought home to me on a recent trip to the Netherlands. At my request, a senior researcher from the ministry of social planning prepared a comparison of boys' and girls' outcomes in Dutch schools. The figures revealed a similar pattern to Australian figures, though not as marked. Significant negative differences for boys were evident in achievement in language/reading, general competence in knowledge, mathematics and comprehension and hours spent on homework. Expulsion rates for boys were dramatically higher than for girls. The researcher who provided the data commented that no-one had ever asked for this type of comparison before. She pointed to the continuing over representation of males in school leadership positions as the more usual focus of gender discussions.

She also explained that, because many metropolitan secondary schools included large numbers of Moroccan, Dutch Antilles and Turkish students, the problems involving boys were identified as race issue rather than anything to do with gender. The following day I was able to show the figures to a deputy principal of a large (3,000 pupils) high school in the north of Holland. The deputy principal was also surprised, not just at the figures, but at the idea that such comparisons were interesting to teachers. She reflected that she had never seen boys' education raised as an issue in any professional publication. She was also unable to recall any teachers expressing frustration at boys' unruly behaviour or lack of motivation. In reflecting on why this might be the case, she was part way through suggesting that, perhaps the behaviour was different in Holland, when she stopped in mid sentence to note that "nearly all of the students I see at my office because of behaviour problems are boys!"

This brief conversation suggests to me the importance of the change in awareness that has taken place in Australia recently. The statistics on literacy levels, expulsions, suicides and so on are dramatic. But without a shift to recognise 'boys issues' as a gender issue, the figures themselves will remain uninteresting, just statistics.

However, raising awareness is a far cry from solving problems. Once school staff and parents have identified that boys are in need of assistance, the tasks for school leaders are just beginning. What is abundantly clear is that innovative leadership will be required. There are no guidelines, teaching kits or experts who can transform schools into learning communities where boys and girls can thrive. School communities and their leaders are obliged to develop their responses, with assistance from other areas, but essentially by developing their own culture. It is within this framework that the information, views and perspectives in this book are offered. There are no recipes here for instant success in boys' education. There are suggestions for useful frameworks, inspirational stories and practical information on how schools from a wide variety of communities have tackled boys' issues.

The frameworks offered in the first section, arrive at the issue from different directions. Steve Biddulph, whose best selling books have helped shape the awareness of boys' issues in Australia, provides a broad historical perspective to help step back from the immediate issues of behaviour to focus on the task of creating boy-friendly schools. Don Edgar provides a link to one of the fundamental outcomes of schooling - the ability to work. His own research, as well as that of others, suggests that the emotional realm, far from being a minor issue for educators concerned with the 'real world' of industry and commerce, is central to emerging notions of business efficiency and best practice in the workplace. My own discussion draws heavily on the seminars and workshops in various parts of Australia where teachers and parents have shared their concerns and thinking on boys' needs and possible futures.

The case studies which follow are grouped into themes which school principals have identified as important. These themes were used to assemble aspects of school strategies but are not exhaustive or mutually exclusive. As you will discover in the rich variety of innovation covered in these pages, many schools have adopted an eclectic approach to improving boys' learning. The themes reappear in many of the accounts.

You will also notice some variation in the style of writing. The original texts were transcripts of addresses given to the Leadership in Boys' Education Conference in May 1999. Some contributors were pleased with the edited version of their talk. Others wished to rewrite their presentation to make additional points not covered during the conference or to include the information conveyed with visual aids on the day.

However, as well as providing examples, we are aware of the overall effect of placing so many good ideas in close proximity. One of the unanticipated outcomes of the conference in May was the effect on the principals attending. Hearing from so many other principals with similar concerns, they said, gave them encouragement to persevere, to continue seeking ways to develop their own schools' response to boys. We are hopeful that the information provided in this book will have a similar effect on readers.

Let us not 'Just do it' as the sports slogan suggests, but let us not prevaricate either, waiting for leadership from somewhere else. School communities are close enough to their boys to see that action is needed. Like the schools represented in these pages, we urge school leaders to get on with the important task of leadership in this vital area for our society.

Richard Fletcher
Manager
Men and Boys' Program

Part I

The Big Picture

Steve Biddulph

Leading Boy-Friendly Schools

Don Edgar

Educating Boys, Emotional Literacy and the Workplace

Richard Fletcher

Leadership on the Ground

Steve Biddulph - Biography

Steve Biddulph was educated at Batty Primary School, Redcar, Yorkshire, and Bonbeach High School, Melbourne, where one of his teachers was Brian Caldwell, now Professor Brian Caldwell. He has science degrees from Melbourne University and the University of Tasmania, and also learned a lot in the wheatfields of the mallee and the apple orchards of Mornington Peninsula. He was a 1980 Churchill Fellow, and won the Davis Award for Educational Innovation for his simulation game Leavin' School.

Steve studied families and community work in NYLTI, Singapore, Sukchar Dham Ashram in Calcutta, and as an exchange student in Silanga village, New Britain. He was apprenticed in family therapy at the Wellington Street Clinic to Colin Mackenzie. He is married to Social Worker and Nurse Shaaron Biddulph and most of their work is collaborative in some way or other.

For ten years he directed the Collinsvale Centre, training the police, medical, and emergency services as well as providing group and family therapy training to health professionals. He was a founding member of Youthline, and of the Tasmanian Critical Incident Team that cared for people after many of that state's tragic events. He is national ambassador for Playgroups (Australia), Patron of Young Media Australia, and Patron of the St Francis Childrens Society (UK).

His books include The Secret of Happy Children 1984, More Secrets 1993,The Making of Love, 1989, Manhood 1994, and Raising Boys 1997. These have together sold almost two million copies and have been in print continually since publication. Raising Boys was the first parenting book ever to be a number one bestseller in Australia. Secret of Happy Children is available in sixteen languages, and was serialized in the People's Republic of China.

Steve now lives in Sussex, England, where he is resting.

Steve Biddulph - Leading Boy-Friendly Schools

Something special happened for Australian education, in the cluster of seventies style hotels on the clifftops above Newcastle's surf beach this May. You could tell even before the conference of principals and senior staff from schools around the country, that the energy was building to something significant and unique. To begin with - the conference planned for 140 participants drew almost three hundred enrollees.

The keen response wasn't a gamble or an accident - people knew what they were getting into. Richard Fletcher and his team at the Men and Boys Program of the Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle had built a reputation for innovating in Boys' Education. Their regular 'Boys In Schools Bulletin', has a worldwide readership, and a non-stop series of seminars and talks given by Richard and others like him across Australia and New Zealand had targeted the growing concern about boys problems with schooling in the 1990's. People were started on the road, and wanted to know - what next?

The decision facing the organizers was a hard one - whether to turn away hundreds of people, or expand the conference in spite of the physical problems involved. They took the middle path, admitting two hundred and seventy and using three adjoining venues to manage the numbers.

A New Field, An Old Field

Six years ago, boys education barely rated as a topic for concern, beyond the handful of boys-only schools that had worked in a traditional mode for generations. Today it is almost universally seen as the number one issue in education. More importantly, it is sparking a grassroots effort and creativity, and an enthusiasm that hasn't been seen since the early days of the girls equity push of the seventies.

Paradoxically, education departments, and some university faculties of education, have been less than helpful. Perceived, quite wrongly, as a threat to girls equity, there has been an unmistakable antipathy from vested interests at the more ideologically driven end of the gender industry. As a result, it's been parents, teachers, and principals in schools from Kalgoorlie to Geeveston, Thursday Island to Christchurch, who have forged onwards, identified the problem, networked the solutions, and begun building a body of commonsense knowledge and strategies which are already taking a hold on the nations' schools. This conference was a sharing, but it was already a celebration of how far we had come.

The Place of Schools in a Wide Scale Social Change

My part in the conference was a small one, hard to convey in print, but I'll do my best to lay out some of my basic premises here. (Hopefully this will convey an impression of greater intelligence than is actually the case.) I'm a person interested in wide scale social change for children and parents, and my views reflect this overarching perspective. I will also share some practicalities that schools have passed on to me from around the world. But it's in the pages that follow, from the contributing schools and speakers, that you will draw concrete how-to information.

There are three basic premises that I base my presentation on:

1. Only for one percent of human history have many of us lived in communities of more than a hundred people, and only for one percent of one percent have we lived in urban cities and had schools for all children. For the great sweep of time, children were raised and educated by parents and relations. And critically, MEN were intimately involved in this education. Boys (and girls) always had men in their lives for many hours a day - until now.

   Today we live in the most underfathered era of human history, and in addition men are also disappearing from schools at an alarming rate. Most children have a primary education that is man-free, on top of a childhood where fathering time is measured in perhaps minutes a day.

2. Clear, incontrovertible evidence from all over the industrial world indicates a fall in boys' performance in schools, in all subject areas, at all ages and levels of education. Added to this are factors we have always taken for granted -the poor behaviour record of boys in schools, propensity for violence, mental health problems, suicide, and physical

risk. A teenage boy in Australia has three times the death risk of a teenage girl. Eighty percent of drug deaths are in young males. And so on.

3. The problem of leadership in boys' education is a complex one. It's clear that men in leadership positions step into a gap in the fathering role. They are required to embody the kind of masculinity we want children to take on, and yet we ourselves have had somewhat defective fathering, mentoring, and leadership, in many instances. (It should be said here that we are being problem focussed. There are many balanced and wonderful, safe, confident and motivated boys. There are many wonderful fathers, mentors, male teachers, and principals who are getting these things right.) It's a proportion thing - when five percent of your body malfunctions, then you get very, very sick. And if half of our boys are underfathered - for sake of argument - then we have very serious problems - as any daily newspaper you choose in recent years would evidence.

   Simple solutions are not enough. In particular - the solution of bringing more men into primary teaching or as volunteers in to schools, must include first answering the question - what KIND of men? Men once predominated in primary schools, and not all were great instances of healthy masculinity. (However, most men have something to offer children, and encouraging fathers to BE fatherly, by provision of fathers evenings, industry-school volunteer schemes, dads as reading coaches, and father and child camping experiences, are being widely and successfully adopted by schools worldwide).

The Challenge of Being the Right Kind of Man for Schools

The especial challenge for male principals, who comprised seventy percent of attendees at this conference, was how to first BE the kind of man that is a good leader in education. Warm, emotionally articulate, comfortable with conflict, non-defensive, energized, creative, and loving. This can be hard when our experience of fatherhood and leadership was often cold, judgemental, punitive, ineffectual or just plain absent.

The first principle of girls gender equity education was to bring competent and successful role models into girls' field of view - doctors, scientists, athletes, actors, authors, managers who were also women.

Its interesting that when challenged with the question of role models for boys - some gender academics have fled to the opposite position - 'we are all just human beings, gender is a social construct, why should boys need to see men, women can teach boys just fine'. And women CAN teach boys just fine - but not how to be men. Gender specific learning may only turn out to be the ten percent that we have to learn from people who are physically and biochemically like ourselves, but it's a critical ten percent and its ten percent we are not getting at the moment. Role modelling - the way we seem to build ourselves on the basis of people we admire who are 'just like us' - racially, economically, physically - is the keystone of human development. We don't learn a subject, or a set of values, or a way of being thoughtful, kind or fair, in the abstract. We learn a person. We gather excellent human beings which we download throughout childhood, adolescence and beyond. Role models may well be the primary function and technique of education.

Many of the stories, activities, and sharings we had in my sessions aimed at helping the men present address their own masculine woundings and hidden potentialities. We deeply appreciated the support and insights of the women present in making this journey.

The Big Questions

The questions posed by Richard Fletcher in setting the context stayed and resonated in our minds for the whole conference.

1. What is good about being a man?
2. What is difficult about being a man?
3. How did we ourselves make the transition from being a boy to being a man?

Its clear to me and I think to most men at the conference that we are still on our journey to manhood, and it was important to communicate at deeper and deeper levels with other men to speed this process along.

The newest evidence from Magnetic Resonance Imaging of the brain at work, as well as the long-understood differences in hormonally driven development of girls and boys - on different timetables and different sequences, can give us clues about how to help boys learn more readily. We know that boys brains grow more slowly, not in fact catching up with girls until the age of nineteen. We know that boys tend to develop gross motor skills first, and only then add on fine motor after the age of about six. Girls do this almost in reverse. All these general statistical patterns apply to the average boy and girl only, and individuals can vary greatly. The generalizations apply to most. Some more instances: boys have 30% more muscle bulk and 25% more red blood cells; girls reach puberty two years before boys on average; girls have more nerve endings in their fingertips. Boys neurological arousal system makes them experience emotions more strongly and quickly. Boys are anxious in disorder, and produce more testosterone when in an unsafe situation. They like to know who is in charge, what the rules are, and if fairness prevails. Girls are somewhat more comfortable with ambiguity. Boys do not feel safe in a non-hierarchical situation, especially an open playground. They may try to establish hierarchies by bullying or forming gangs for self protection - this indicates not a pathology in boys, but that we have put them in a situation without enough adult or older peer leadership. Boys need structure.

Not, Repeat Not, Gender Determinism

These and many other gender differences, do not amount to 'biological determinism' but rather a guide to how we can best educate. If we expose boys to enriched verbal and language stimulation by talking and reading to them as babies and toddlers, we can actually alter the wiring of their brains to make them more like those of girls - less lateralized, more multi-tasking, more literate. (Affection and bonding in babyhood, according to the work of Professor Graham Vimpani, can prevent problems ranging from violence to drug abuse in later life, because they affect the structure of the brain itself, in lifelong ways.)

Gender differences can be overemphasized, but they can also be underplayed with disastrous effects. Based on knowing about human physiology we can take practical and easy measures which hugely improve boys school experience. Many schools now have a fifteen minute exercise break at the start of school. The girls enjoy it, the boys NEED it, so as to let out some of the explosive energy and need for movement that their muscles - especially in primary school - need in order to enervate properly as they grow and develop.

Another simple but huge change would be allowing boys (and those girls who need it) to remain in pre-school or kinder until they are developmentally ready for grade one, rather than marching in lock step to the calendar as if every child was ready at five for sit down learning (which they are not).

We Don't Need Gender Politics

Its been a frightening experience for me, coming from a hard science training in physics and biology, and then the warm and proactive world of child development studies, to encounter the bitter and reactionary world of educational theory. Pure intellectual fraud and ideological fascism seems much in evidence, and especially an inability to see shades of grey. If you are for boys, you must be against girls, seems to be the credo of these people. New thinking, which goes against the comfortable platitudes of the 1960s that we are all born the same, is simply blinkered out or denied. We are all born equal, but we are not all born the same - even within a gender there are huge differences that schools have to address.

In some ways the resistance to meeting the needs of boys at the top of the educational hegemony, is the best thing that could ever have happened. As a result, boys' education has been a grassroots movement swelling up from schools themselves. Imagine if universities and departments of education had led the move. Plagues of consultants, voluminous guidelines, mind numbing seminars, benchmarks, committees, and the kind of thought-control that characterized the more authoritarian end of the girls equity movement, would have made life miserable indeed. This hasn't happened, and hopefully won't. As a result - the real reason that good teachers do good things - caring for kids - will lead to genuine rather than tokenistic change.

The good things that feminism brought - awareness of unconscious and structural sexism, resources for girls' materials, classroom innovation, role models, a whole cultural push for girls to 'get a life', hopefully will also happen for boys. As one who is sprouting grey hairs rapidly, its great to see that the same spirit, and in fact often the same people, who espoused girls equity at the grassroots level, are now saying - it's time we lifted up boys AND girls together, by understanding them, listening to them, caring for them, using the community, the parents, and the larger world to help us do so.

Closing Words

Again, we have to keep our perspective. School has served most boys well. It focuses their energies, taps their enthusiasms, provides great men and women to help bridge them into the adult world. But for way too many boys, school has always been a source of humiliation, misery, fear, boredom and failure.

We can change this.

School isn't the root of social good or evil. I have always seen it as a kind of second chance - the place where unfairness of birth can sometimes be evened up. A linkage from childhood to the adult world.

The world today is both beautiful and marvellous, but also so often ugly and so often sad. I can't live in this world without wanting to change it, and I think you feel the same. I can't think of a better way to change our world at this point in history than to produce a better kind of man, in sufficient numbers to make a difference.

We can make school a happy and productive place for boys as well as girls. We will have to remake ourselves as men and women in order to do this. These are good reasons to be alive.

I am profoundly grateful to Richard Fletcher, Director, Di James, and the staff of the Family Action Centre for creating this special and inspiring time, and to all who brought their enthusiasms and were willing to share so personally.

Don Edgar - Biography

Don is Australia's best-known authority on social trends as they affect families, communities and the workplace.

He was Foundation Director (for 14 years) of the Australian Institute of Family Studies and was Secretary of the International Committee on Family Research.

He is currently Professor at RMIT's Centre for Workplace Culture Change, advising companies on work-life programs, better linkages with community services and the schools, and studying job skills gaps in rural regions.

Don writes regularly for the *Weekend Australian*, on 'Relationships in the 90s'. He consults privately and is a busy public lecturer. Some of his latest consultancies include 'The New Links Workplace', getting companies to forge closer links with community services; a Discussion Paper for Deakin Human Services on 'An Ideal Model of Family Services Delivery'; and a Discussion Paper for Queensland Education Ministry on 'Social Trends and the Schools in the New Millennium'.

Dr. Edgar did his first degrees at the University of Melbourne (BA, Dip Ed, B Ed, M Ed); taught in secondary schools before becoming a lecturer in teacher education at the University of Melbourne; then he studied for his PhD at Stanford University in California before being appointed Professor & Research Associate at the University of Chicago. On his return to Australia, he held senior positions in Sociology at Monash and La Trobe Universities before being appointed by the federal government to establish the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Don's most recent books include *Men, Mateship, Marriage* (Harper Collins 1997, reprinted 1998); *When Too Much Change Is Never Enough,* with his colleagues Anna Bodi and Glenn Maggs (Woodslane, 1997); and he is currently completing a new book for Harper Collins, entitled *Linking the Future: The Dynamics of Workplace, Community and Culture Change.* He has published 15 books and many academic papers and reports.

Don Edgar is married to Dr. Patricia Edgar, Director of the Australian Children's Television Foundation (and biographer of Janet Holmes a Court); is a father of two daughters, and has two grandsons and one granddaughter.

Don Edgar - Educating Boys, Emotional Literacy and the Workplace

Men have had a bad press in recent times and I want, in this address, to indicate some of the reasons why, but also to suggest that we're not as stupid as we are often portrayed. You, as the educators of boys, need to capitalise on the positive signs of change and ensure the men of the future are more emotionally intelligent than their forbears.

"Men always want to be a woman's first love: women have a more subtle instinct: what they like is to be a man's last romance."

You all know the litany of problems: men can't communicate their feelings, they don't read the signs of marital breakdown before it's too late, they don't know their own children, they won't go to the doctor for a regular check-up and thus die earlier than women of heart problems, skin cancers, etc.

As the cartoons suggest, men are unaware of the emotional needs of their partners (husband reading the newspaper, wife sitting stark naked next to him and he asks, vaguely: "Any plans for this evening, hon.?"); wife doing the dishes, husband watching TV, calling out: "By the way, hon., great food, great wine, great you,"; man sitting at restaurant table unaware that his partner is leaving, burbling on: "The sound of violins, the night, the wine, the ambience - but most of all, Louise, you!"). Men are also too often absent from their children (couple in bed, child standing there next to them, he says in surprise: "I thought it was just one of those bad dreams, but apparently, honey, we have a kid.") And their adjustment to the changed circumstances of women in society is still somewhat stilted. (All-male managers' group, responding to a female manager's report: "That was a fine report, Barbara. But since the sexes speak different languages, I probably didn't understand a word of it."; wife responding to husband: "No, I don't think our marriage would benefit from a mission statement.").

Now all of this is true, to an extent. Boys are brought up to hide their feelings, not to disclose too much to their rivals, never to admit weakness. But that has been pretty functional. After all, it has been a man's world out there, and if you're a wimp, the others don't give you any quarter. In fact, the research on male-female differences shows that girls are more attuned to feelings and their nuances than are boys, they are better at detecting fleeting feelings in the faces of other people, and they do tend to experience the same feeling that another person in their company feels. However, where people are deliberately trying to conceal their true feelings, there is no difference in the ability of men and women in reading the situation; and there is no difference when they are asked to sense the unstated thoughts of someone in an ongoing encounter. The more emotional leakage there is (via words, body language, as well as facial expression) the better men become at reading the emotions of others. Their empathic accuracy is equal to that of women.

So the nonsense perpetrated in books such as Gray's, Men are From Mars, Women are from Venus (1993), is really just a cheap play on the surface differences. As you know, on all psychological characteristics, the bell curves have immense overlap; the within-group differences are larger than the between-group differences. And empathic accuracy (Ickes, 1997) is very important in the business arena, where people often have good reason to conceal their true feelings, and being able to read the signs accurately is crucial in clinching a deal, selling or negotiating something, where it's harder to control all the channels of expression. So there is no evidence of a 'female intuition' advantage. Men have as much latent ability for empathy, but usually less motivation to be empathetic, than women. They are trained to conceal, to be cool, not to 'seem' sensitive, because sensitivity in a macho world is a sign of weakness. If women are prompted to prove that empathy is a hallmark of feminine identity, they make more effort. It's the image men wish to convey, not their lack of empathic ability or accuracy, that makes the difference.

It's also a myth that men don't communicate with their wives/partners. They may not do so as much as, or in quite the ways, their partners would like, but most men insist that their 'best mate' (usually seen as a male bonding term) is 'me missus'. In my research for the book Men, Mateship, Marriage (Harper Collins, 1997), I found across all socio-economic groups that the one person men could disclose their real feelings to was their partner.

You may wonder why I'm talking about empathy and reading emotions. To put it bluntly, without such skills, no-one, including men, would survive, and in the world of the global marketplace, emotional intelligence is rapidly taking over from problem-solving and adaptability as the key skill for success. In this I am drawing from Daniel Goleman's (1997) book Emotional Intelligence: Why it can Matter More than IQ.

You may recall the Stanford University experiments of the 1960-s. Where Walter Mischel gave children the 'Marshmallow Test'. Put simply, the experimenter placed a marshmallow on the table in front of the child; he then said he was leaving the room for a short while; the child could eat the marshmallow, but if they could wait, then they would be given two. Some kids couldn't wait and immediately ate the marshmallow. The others delayed, sometimes with great difficulty, but were rewarded with two marshmallows. It's simply a delay of gratification test. But what was significant was that, many years later, the 'two marshmallow kids' had done significantly better than the others on school achievement, entry into college, job replacement, etc. The kids who had grabbed the one that was there were more likely to have failed, become delinquent, teenage pregnant, jobless, and so on. Goleman sees this test as an indicator of being in touch with your own emotions, able to 'read' a situation accurately, which stood the one group in good stead for the rest of their lives.

You will notice that I am not talking of emotional intelligence in terms of getting boys to love their fathers, or men to hug trees. I'm talking about a real skill that must be, and can be, learned for dealing with life's social demands. Another example is the true story of the pilot coming in to land in Portland, Oregon, with the landing gear stuck. He was a man with a violent temper who would brook no opposition to his authority. So while he fiddled with the controls, his crew failed to point out that the fuel gauge was nearing empty. The plane crashed and all crew and passengers lost their lives. Anger, fear, denial of communication can have fatal results, and it is this that boys and men need to be taught.

There are two closely related elements to emotional intelligence, variously called intra- and inter-personal intelligence (Howard Gardner), social and emotional competence, emotional literacy, and inter-personal skills. They are self-insight and empathy. Salovey & Meyer (1990) describe it as "being able to monitor and regulate one's own and others' feelings, and to use feelings as a guide to thought and action." In other words, it is an applied skill, not just a vague emotional capacity. Goleman (1998) in his second book, Working with Emotional Intelligence, describes it as "the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships." Again, the stress is on using the skills of social and emotional competence.

Time will not permit much further detail, but there are five essential elements involved, and they can be, are, and should be taught to boys and girls in the home, the school and (if they have missed out) in the workplace:

1. Self-awareness: knowing what we feel in a situation; using this to guide decision-making; realistic self-assessment and self-confidence. (As an aside, it's pointless to try and teach self-esteem, if children have no competences to be proud of. Empty praise for worthless effort is soon seen as phoney.)

2. Self-regulation: the ability to delay gratification to achieve goals; using emotions to facilitate, not interfere with, the task at hand; being conscientious and persevering; recovering well from distress, being resilient.

3. Motivation: self-guidance towards goals; taking the initiative; striving to improve; persevering in the face of setbacks and frustrations. (Again, we do students a disservice if we let them think anything worthwhile can be achieved without real effort. They need to experience the joy of 'flow', the exhilaration of becoming lost in a task which requires deep concentration.)

4. Empathy: sensing what other people are feeling: the ability to take their perspective; cultivating rapport with a broad diversity of people. (The Pauline Hansons of this world will not win - this is an essential element of the post-modern world, where respect for diversity is the only way to draw from its strengths.)

5. Social skills: handling your own emotions well in situations; reading social situations accurately; interacting smoothly and effectively; using these skills to persuade and lead, negotiate and settle disputes, for cooperation and teamwork.

It should be clear that we are not talking about getting boys and men to be 'more expressive', to 'let it all hang out', to 'shed a tear now and then', though there's nothing wrong with that in its place. We are talking about a crucial social skill, one that is essential in any social interaction, whether that be a marriage partnership, a workplace team or a community organisation.

Emotional intelligence can be taught, and it should be incorporated as part of the curriculum from early childhood education on. There is no need to push it as an extra curriculum subject, though that is what many US schools are now doing. They call it 'Self Science', or 'Social and Emotional Learning'; examples are the Yale Social Competence Program and the Oakland Child Development Project. Every sensible teacher incorporates such lessons in every classroom, but it would do no harm for teachers to be made more conscious of how important such procedures are, compared with a strictly cognitive approach to teaching and learning. They should encourage assertiveness, as opposed to aggression or passivity; active listening; self-awareness (the 'Emotions Cube' is one way of doing this in a group, a classroom or a workshop with executives); recognising your own strengths and weaknesses, the consequences of alternative choices; empathy, respecting and taking account of other people's feelings; good relationships and communication skills; the ability to negotiate conflict (the SOCS Stoplight - Situation, Options, Consequences, Solutions - is one technique).

But emotional intelligence needs to be incorporated into the school as a whole, as an organisation, permeating its entire culture. We know from the research that a sense of belonging, of connectedness gives meaning and security to children's lives, yet how often do we design our schools and classrooms to be inclusive of everyone? Why can't we have home rooms, fewer teachers to cover more subjects so young students feel a few adults really know them? Why can't we have group learning instead of competitive, individualised tests of achievement, cross- age teams and tutoring? The hidden curriculum carries potent messages to students too: how lessons are taught, how 'discipline' is handled; the teacher as a role model in emotional competence; the inclusion or exclusion of parents; consistency across classrooms, the playground, the cafeteria; the school campus as a 'caring community' where kids feel respected, needed, included, valued, and bonded to teachers, fellow students and the school itself? (as compared with the recent Columbine High School massacre, where 'jocks' were valued over all others, and little was done to include the alienated, excluded groups).

For teachers and school principals who resist the notion that they have a responsibility for the emotional wellbeing of their students (most often expressed in more acceptable terms, such as, "I can't be a mother or social worker to every child!"), my message is, you are already, you can't avoid it, and it is every teacher's responsibility to nurture the child's growing emotional intelligence as much as their cognitive skills. Every piece of research on effective childhood socialisation identifies two broad parameters, emotional support and limit setting. If you can picture these two as x and y axes then the model can be thought of as containing four cells: where parental/adult affect, support, emotional involvement with the child is high, and clear limits are set for the child's behaviour, we see the best results - this is 'authoritative' parenting. But where parents are too warm and limits are too lax, we get permissive child-rearing; almost as harmful in its own way as 'authoritarian' parenting where warmth is low and limit-setting is too strict. The fourth cell, combining low support/warmth and low limit-setting leaves the poor child totally confused; he doesn't know whether he is loved or what is permitted. If parents and teachers all applied these simple principles in practice they and the children would be a much happier lot than they are today. Indeed, many parents have little time for consistent parenting because of long work hours; others are angry and distressed because they have no work at all, or not enough to keep the family together.

"As family life no longer offers growing numbers of children a sure footing in life, schools are left as the one place communities can turn to for correctives to children's deficiencies in emotional and social intelligence. That is not to say that schools alone can stand in for all the social institutions that too often are in or nearing collapse. But since virtually every child goes to school, it offers a place to reach children with basic lessons for living that they may never get otherwise. Emotional literacy implies an expanded mandate for schools, taking up the slack for failing families in socialising children. This daunting task requires two major changes: that teachers go beyond their traditional mission, and that people in the community become more involved in schools."

Most of you will know of the Health-Promoting Schools movement, or of the model of the 'full service school'. This is the way of the future and schools must end their silo mentality and become more closely linked with parents, community support services and the business community if they are to stay relevant to the needs of children in the next century.

The critical points are those of transition between primary and secondary school, and the transition to puberty. They are turning points in a child's path towards competent adulthood, and a central goal of schooling should be to ensure clear lessons are learned about the self and others. We know in particular that the pathway of boys to violence includes early impulsiveness and quickness to anger, an inability to pay attention, becoming social rejects by end of grade school and bonding with a circle of others like themselves, commencing crime sprees in the middle school years, with a police record and readiness for expanding violence by early adulthood. It is by changing the whole school, not by targeting individual children 'at risk', that the most effective interventions can be made. That's what leadership in boys' education is about - structuring the school environment so it is inclusive and emotionally intelligent as a learning community.

The emotional bedrock of character is self-discipline, and schools should not shrink from teaching and demanding this quality in every child. The old-fashioned notion of 'will' is basically an ability to defer gratification and channel one's urges to act. No society can survive without people who have that will. The ability to put aside our self-centred focus opens the way to empathy, real listening, caring, altruism and compassion; it breaks down stereotypes and breeds tolerance - all capacities increasingly called on in our pluralistic society. They are the basic arts of democracy and commitment to civic and moral values.

To conclude, they are also the skills most essential and increasingly valued in the world of work. So I am not saying kids should be taught emotional intelligence simply to make them better people or to make schools nicer places to be. Remember my earlier example of the angry airline pilot. The cockpit is a microcosm of any working organisation, and "Stress makes people stupid". Whereas the jungle fighter was the boss of old, the virtuoso in inter-personal skills is the corporate future. Valuing diversity, networking effectively, team-building, airing criticism constructively are all critical to high performance and productivity.

As Goleman notes (p.314) "Farsighted companies are realising that they, too, have a stake in how well schools are educating their future workers. Envision coalitions among local governments, schools, and business aimed at boosting the collective level of emotional intelligence in the community." In the global age, most work will be stitched together by each individual according to his/her skills and the demand for them. Some 77% of all US 'knowledge workers' already decide what they will do on the job, they are not told by others. Increasingly, people will do work, not have a job; they will work in virtual teams to meet needs, solve problems, utilising a specialised mix of talent and expertise. "Autonomy can only work if it goes hand in hand with self-control, trustworthiness and conscientiousness. And as people work less 'for the company', and more for themselves, emotional intelligence will be required to maintain the relationships vital for workers' survival."

The signs are promising that employers and men in general are gradually getting the point. These are not simply 'soft options', they affect directly the effectiveness of every individual in the home, in the schools and in the workplace. In companies I deal with to help design a more healthy workplace culture I no longer see the surprise expressed by the boss in this last cartoon. "It has come to my attention that you have a life outside the office!" In the New Links Workplace of the future, one would hope the boys have become whole men, in touch with their own feelings and abilities and fully able to cooperate effectively with others.

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Richard Fletcher - Biography

While serving his apprenticeship as a plumber, Richard attended night school to gain entry to Sydney University to study science. He taught Science in high schools in co-educational and all-boy schools in NSW, Kenya and the United States. After working as an education officer for TAFE specialising in reaching marginalised groups, he was contracted to the Health Promotion Unit in Newcastle as a research fellow to examine domestic violence prevention. As a result, he became interested in male health issues and pioneered the development of Men's Health and Boys Health as areas of study.

In 1992, he founded a community-based group, *Fathers Against Rape*, to conduct Stopping Rape workshops with teenage boys in schools. As a lecturer in Health Studies in the Discipline of Paediatrics, University of Newcastle, he has taught male health studies to teachers, nurses, occupational therapists, and medical students.

Since January 1996, he has been the Manager of the Men and Boys' Program of the Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle. In this capacity, he has addressed meetings of teachers, parents and health workers in every state and territory of Australia. He has been a Consultant to Fremantle and Logan Divisions of General Practice in developing their projects for male adolescents and was a member of the NH&MRC working party on Unintentional Injury on Young Males.

In 1999, he convened the *Leadership in Boys Education National Forum* for school leaders attended by over 200 school principals followed by the *Working With Boys - Building Fine Men Conference* attended by teachers, counsellors, youth and justice workers from around Australia. He is co-editor of *The Boys in Schools Bulletin,* a practical journal for teachers.

Richard Fletcher - Leadership on the Ground

The idea of addressing the leadership issue through a National Forum originated in forty-seven, I can be precise about this, forty-seven conversations. The most recent and deliberate was with Ian Lillico, Principal of Bullsbrook Secondary School in Western Australia, who is presenting his work at this forum. Last year he mentioned, in the middle of a conversation we were having about boys, that if we held a seminar for principals he would bring some over from Western Australia. That was the immediate spark for developing this forum so Ian deserves full credit for suggesting the idea. Of the other forty-six conversations, forty-five of them were actually quite similar, they occurred the year before. They were conversations between my six-year-old daughter and myself. In that year, I travelled away from Newcastle to do seminars forty-five times. Every time I packed we had the same conversation. I can't quite convey the sense of pathos and abandonment that she managed to get into her words but it was along the lines of "Oh you're going away again!" And I'd say "Yes I am". To which she replied "Why do you have to go away?" "Because I've got work to do". "Why do you have to go away to do the work? Why can't they come here?" And so on. So forty-five of the conversations were quite similar and raised for me the inconsistency with advocating male involvement in the various aspects of raising children, not just boys, but male involvement in the lives of boys and girls, and my own lifestyle, which meant I was never home. So another strong reason for having a forum here was to invite people to come here, instead of me going there, which I understand is more inconvenient for you, I understand that.

The last conversation that led to this forum took place late at night when I was staying with a principal in a rural area. The principal told me about two boys that had come to his office on the anniversary of their sister's death. Their sister was killed in a road traffic accident quite close to their house. These two boys weren't living in the best of circumstances and the principal suggested to them at that time, when the news of the tragedy reached the school, that on the anniversary they should come and see him. And they did. At a particularly busy time they arrived at his door. He described the scene - the people waiting to see him, the telephone calls that had to be answered and the various bits of business that principals have to do on a minute by minute basis. And he described his realisation, when the two boys appeared at his door, that he really couldn't just put them into the schedule somewhere down the track. He had to stop what he was doing and take them out to the site of their sister's grave and create a space for them to make something of this event. Two aspects struck me then: the morality involved in this principal's decision and the role of school leaders in addressing boy's needs.

We are pushed, it seems to me, to think about leadership in business terms. We are strongly encouraged to look to models that come from the business world and try and lift the leadership of schools along those lines. And I think what stood out clearly in this account of a small incident in this principals' life was that the essential nature of school communities is to be a moral and ethical community. That's the essential nature of what we're doing. And that means that industry models, such as XEROX or McDonalds, great models though they might be in their environment, do not transfer because schools are not just businesses with a different end product. They are basically moral communities and that means that the leadership that we need to forge in schools is leadership about building support around moral areas, about ethics and values.

Essentially, our work with boys must be based on our values around men and boys. What makes leadership of boys difficult is that it is precisely this question: What do we value about men? that our community finds difficult to answer. Through working with schools over the last few years, I have become aware of a tension between the top and the bottom of the education pyramid. Policy advisers and academics around Australia have been very cautious about supporting boys. Unsure of community values about men and boys, and reliant on a theory of gender which sees men's power as central, they have been fearful of recognising boys' needs in case girls' needs are pushed into the background. As a result, they have insisted that the only legitimate need that the boys have is to stop dominating girls. Classroom teachers and parents, however, have been very clear that boys have a variety of unmet needs and that boys need attention. As principals have attempted to balance these competing pressures they have had to develop their own understanding of boys' identity on the run. Although teachers and parents have clearly identified the need to address boys, there remains in the community a very real confusion about the value of males and male behaviour. The appropriate way to motivate boys, to broaden boys' options or to engage boys in the culture of the school has been far from obvious. Teachers and parents clearly want something done, but they are not sure what should be done. To provide leadership in the area of boys' education, principals will have to venture far beyond the relatively safe value of 'a fair go for girls', to tackle a much trickier problem: building support for how we value both girls and boys.

Given the lack of direction from senior levels in the education sector, and the complexity of factors influencing boys' behaviours, many principals have been understandably reluctant to take up leadership in this area. Even in schools where staff have high levels of concern about boys' learning, principals have often delegated the issue to a junior teacher, and indicated that they personally do not see it as a priority. This forum is being held both to reassure principals that progress is possible and to raise for discussion the nature of leadership in the emerging area of boys' education.

Appropriate leadership for boys includes providing models for boys, but not just male role models. There are different, but equally important, roles for female and male leaders of boys. Before discussing these roles, however, let me attempt to describe the level and the nature of the leadership we should be aiming at. Recently I attended the funeral of an elderly woman. I went because of my friendship with her grandson, a young man who was recently off heroin and out of jail. I didn't know his grandmother well, I went along to support him. At the funeral, the minister of the small, Protestant church delivered the sermon. His address featured God the Father and his son, presenting to the mourners at the funeral, an undeniable layer of men at the top. The language used was unambiguous: it was clearly a male God and his son. But in the middle of the service, men and women who knew the deceased talked about her life. She was born in about 1920. She'd been an outstanding woman in some ways: in the surf here in Newcastle she took on her male peers and beat them regularly in surf carnivals. She gained some notoriety because she was so good at things that were traditional boy skills. The discussion of her life was delivered with vigour, describing her struggle against conservative ideas about men's and women's roles. It was a story of courage and tenacity, of liberation and emancipation. This section of the service stood out as energetic and vibrant. At the conclusion of the funeral, my young friend and some other men picked up the coffin and took it out to the hearse before we went downstairs to be served scones and tea by the women.

For my young friend struggling to establish a drug-free lifestyle, at the same time as losing his close friendship with his grandmother, the male identity offered through the service seemed a poor second to the rich picture of women's emancipation delivered through the morning. In the educational context, I am suggesting, we can see a similar dynamic. The undeniable fact of men holding prominent leadership positions in society has been assumed to be sufficient to motivate boys. It has seemed common sense that having men achieve public office or reach senior positions in corporations would inspire boys to follow. We know from the documented differences in boys' and in girls' outcomes, and from parents and teachers' frustration, that this simply is not so. At the school level, having a male principal guarantees nothing about the motivation of the boys.

In recent years we have increasingly (and appropriately) pointed to the negatives of boys' behaviour such as sexual harassment and violence. 'Masculinity' in the school context has become a negative term, synonymous with domination, and boys have been repeatedly urged to 'give up' their privileges. In order to provide positive leadership, however, we should ask through which relationships do we offer the boys in the school, hope for themselves and their peers? Where do we offer boys inspiration for themselves: to see themselves as men in a future that's positive? What system of honour for males are we advocating?

Male honour is not often explicitly discussed in our communities, apart from occasional news items about extreme violence, but the issue was recently raised through an enormously popular movie, Titanic. In this fictionalised account of the 1912 sinking of the cruise ship Titanic, a pivotal scene shows third class passengers attempting to get up onto the deck to reach the lifeboats. At the head of the stairway they discovered that they were locked behind steel gates guarded by armed crew members. The scene graphically captures the desperation and panic of the passengers and the indecisiveness of the terrified crew whom, following orders, attempt to allow just women and children through.

When the film was shown in England, this scene sparked an uproar. As a result, the records of the disaster were released to the public. While there was no evidence that gates were locked, the preferential position of upper class passengers was confirmed. Many more first class passengers survived than those from second or third class. What was not discussed in the media coverage of the controversy was the differences in survival rates of men compared to women. For women in first class, 97% survived compared to 84% in second and 55% in third. For men, the figures for survival were 34% in first class, 8% in second class and 12% in third.

The lack of any discussion of the gender differences revealed in these figures indicates that the notion that men's honour (self worth) remains linked to sacrifice. As in times past, this notion of expendability is part of the sense of honour that we offer to boys. In the time since the early 1900s however, we have eroded the notion of men's roles (and dismantled the value of male honour). This has not been only the result of the women's movement. Changes in employment patterns from an industrial to a service economy, changes in our conception of national defence and policing and heightened public awareness of sexual abuse, domestic violence and the high costs of physical injury, have all contributed to a shift in our notion of men's roles. A result of this shift is that we have greatly expanded the situations, beyond physical survival, where men are considered expendable or unnecessary. The lack of men's contact with, and care of, their children, for example, has been recognised as a problem only in terms of equity between adult men and women. The notion that children need men in their lives is studiously ignored or denied. At the same time, for boys, the need for a sense of honour as part of a guide to a positive future has not been thought necessary. Simply reinstating the traditional sense of honour will clearly not do. But offering a moral code to boys which includes an honourable role for them now, and in the future as men, is a central task of leadership.

Are we in a position to spell out this code of honour at the moment? Perhaps not, but we can make a start on developing one. In holding seminars with men and women educators and parents, I have found that there are questions, which, when asked sincerely, generate a positive approach to addressing boys' needs (valuing boys) which is inclusive of girls' needs. Those of you who have attended my presentations to staff and parents will know that I request male volunteers to come out to the front to form a panel. Once the three or four men (teachers or fathers) are out the front, I ask them to answer a standard set of questions. I also have a panel of women teachers answer questions. We don't have time today to run the panels but I think the questions are still the key questions for you and your school to answer and we hope to give you some opportunities during this National Forum to develop some answers.

The first question for the men is "What is marvellous about being a man? What is great about it?" And if you are tempted to answer "Well I've never been a woman so how would I know?" let me just say that if that is the only response that comes to mind, then it will put you in a very weak position if you are leading boys. It also makes the task of deciding what to do about boys much more difficult. As the saying goes "If you don't know where you are going, then any road will do". The equivalent question for women is "What is it you find delightful about boys behaviour?"

The second question for both men and women is "Tell us about a man you admire." Now I've asked this in hundreds of settings in every area of Australia, the answers have been remarkably consistent. The biggest single group that men nominate are their fathers or an immediate older relative, grandfather or uncle. This is also a common answer amongst boys I should point out. It is a common answer amongst women too. Other popularly admired men are international figures such as Nelson Mandela. Teachers frequently name a former teacher of theirs or a principal that they have known. The third question for men is "What aspects of yourself (meaning your personality not your physique), would you point to as a role model for boys? What is it that you would like boys to notice about you?" That's the question for men. For women it is "When you look at your male colleagues, in whatever context that happens, what are the strengths that you notice in them as men? And the last question for men is "How did you make the shift from being a boy into being a man?" Many men, put on the spot in front of their peers, answer by saying "Oh gee, I haven't got there yet", or, " I'm still waiting for it to happen." Which may be a perfectly honest response, but I think that it's an important question for male school leaders to answer if we're guiding boys and inspiring them. The last question for women is "How does it benefit boys to have a woman doing your job? In what way does it benefit them?" To underline the intention of this question: this is not a question wondering *if* having women in these positions is advantageous to boys, this question supposes that *there are distinct benefits* and asks the women to articulate them.

These questions, as you can see, point to the different strengths that male and female staff might bring to the school. The questions are important for school leaders to be able to answer because simply to have a concern about boys, it seems to me, isn't enough. Leadership for boys' education needs to have a much deeper understanding of what it is we value about men and women in our community and how you might build support among your staff and your community around those values. Seeking to identify our values for males and females has not been encouraged in the education sector. Policy in this area has generally been informed by the academic literature which asserts that gender is socially constructed and that the best approach is to aim, not for fine men or fine women but for androgynous, generic individuals. Answering this substantial literature, with its impoverished notion of humanity, would lead us back into the sterile nature-nurture debate which many of us ploughed through in our undergraduate education training. So here I am simply noting the existence of this view.

Women Leaders, Role Models and the Audience of Men

Can women be leaders in boys' education? Absolutely. We have abundant evidence that women principals, leading teachers and deputy principals can identify boys' needs and enlist others to improve boys' schooling experiences and outcomes. We should also note that women in the community, as parents, were the first group to publicly acknowledge boys' education as a major concern in the early 1990's. The high numbers of older male teachers leaving teaching, and the low numbers of male undergraduates preparing to teach, clearly indicate that teaching will remain a mainly female occupation. On current trends, the proportion of women teachers will rise overall while the proportion in positions of authority will remain static. Women should be involved in leading boys because they will be the ones who are in contact with boys. It is also evident that boys learn much of their idea of what it is to be a man from the women and girls around them. When Gwenda Sanderson, a remedial reading teacher specialist, asked her reading group of 10 year olds to come up with a list of attributes for a 'cool' guy, the boys' list did not include reading. Neither did the girls'. Both lists highlighted active pursuits. Women not only can be leaders for boys, they should be.

Do men have a distinct role then? Yes they do. Because in order to change gender behaviour, the linked attitudes and beliefs about "what men do" must also be changed. This is the unique role for males in contact with boys. Take boys' poor performance compared to girls in literacy for example. Individual school, state and national surveys have identified a gap between male and female students in reading and writing levels. In addressing this gap, both male and female principals can make it clear, by their personal actions, and by the resources and attention they devote to the issue, that literacy is a priority for the school. However, a key requirement is for the boys to see literacy as important for males. Because for boys, a principal task for their development during the school years is to fashion a male identity. This is why, if other boys, older boys and men are not seen to be interested in the activities of reading and writing, boys' motivation will be negatively affected. The boys, in this sense, provide an audience for the older boys and men in the community. The boys watch and listen.

But changing behaviour also requires practicing and refining the behaviour. Especially for new behaviour that carries some risk of humiliation or ridicule, developing a comfort with the new behaviour requires a chance to practice safely. Males also form an audience for boys. When Braitling Primary School in Alice Springs wanted to send a message to boys that getting an award on assembly was OK for boys to aspire to, they encouraged dads to attend. By notifying the dads ahead of time, it was possible for them to leave work briefly to go to the school and be seen by the boys as they were presented with their awards. The important point was not just that men attended and provided an audience for the unusual behaviour (getting an award), it was that these were significant men for the boys in question. Because boys are so keen to figure out how to be men that they watch closely what older males value. But simply "seeing" significant men at a distance, for example sports stars, endorse reading, will not be the most powerful influence on reading behaviour. The strongest influence will come from males with whom they have relationships, the older boys in the school, uncles and dads. Seeing these males reading, for example, will be significant. Reading to these significant males, and receiving acknowledgment and approval will be even more powerful. If the interaction extends to discussing reading and sharing enjoyment of reading, the experience may be even more powerful again.

For both male and female principals, an important task of leadership is to recruit males to build their relationships with boys and to model and endorse desirable behaviours.

In summary, the tasks for leadership in boys' education are three:

1. To enlist the support of the school community in deciding what is meant by "a fine man" and male honour.

2. For male principals: to model desirable values for men.
   For female principals: to convey clear support for valuing men.

3. To encourage males from the school staff and the community to form strong relationships with boys to assist in the boys' transition into fine men.

Part II

Case Studies

Case Studies A

The Spectrum of Boys' Programs

Jenni Griffiths

Aboriginal Cultural Programs and Interagency Co-operation in Boys' Strategies

Peter Ireland

Pastoral Care at St Ignatius' College, Riverview

Jenni Griffiths - Biography

Jenni spent 17 years working as a secondary humanities teacher in rural NSW. A desire to work in the wider area of education then led to her working with Quality Assurance teams and into educational consultancy with the NSW Department of Education. It was in this period working as a consultant that her interest in learning theory was developed and honed.

Jenni worked as the Principal of an isolated K-12 predominantly Aboriginal school in western NSW. She is now the Principal of Kempsey East Public School on the North Coast of NSW.

Jenni Griffiths - Aboriginal Cultural Programs and Interagency Co-operation in Boys Strategies

The school is in an isolated aboriginal community of about nine hundred people. To go shopping we drove 200kms or if we wanted to go to a bigger centre, it was a 260km drive, and we knew every kangaroo and every emu along the way.

The community is isolated and very economically depressed. There is high unemployment, with very few people in paid work. Many adults lack the social skills to manage problems. It is a community where many people solve their problems by yelling, screaming and fighting. There are frequent domestic violence occurrences and the majority of models that the boys see have very little respect for women. There are significant levels of sexual assault, abuse and neglect of children.

Drug usage is extremely high, including alcohol and illegal drugs. Petrol sniffing is a major issue with the youth, particularly for boys, but increasingly for girls as well. Many children at the school have low self-esteem and future expectations and goals.

We tried a boys' program. We started it two years ago. The catalyst was the suicide of one of our twelve-year-old boys. At this time there were quite a few suicides, mainly older males, and it seemed to be coming into the younger age group. We said, 'Wow, what is happening to these children that life is not worth living any longer?'

I put a submission in, and we got enough money to employ a welfare teacher for a term and a half as an AP, and to employ another Aboriginal Education Assistant in the school full-time, to work with the boys in the school. We devised programs that were going to support those children. We worked with the David Shores, Boys' and Relationship Program and remodelled it. We used that as the skeleton and put an indigenous influence on it. Ninety one per cent of the students at the school were

Aboriginal, so we worked with the Aboriginal community. We asked for their advice. We would sit down and say 'Now what is the best way to get through to these youths? Are the lessons we are planning suitable?'

Interagency Approach

We started the interagency approach because we felt there were so many aspects of these children's lives that needed addressing, not just coming to school. The problems were right around their whole life and we wanted to encircle them with support.

The first thing we did was to organise the meetings. We initiated a series of community meetings with representatives from the community, the elders, Aboriginal Health, a representative from the Women's Refuge, Juvenile Justice, and any community groups that were really keen to come. Some of the business people came along. We asked AECG to attend. The Department of Education sent some consultants and then, of course we had our school representatives.

In these meetings we asked, 'What are the issues you really feel confront our youth?' We went from this, and gathered the shared knowledge of many different groups of community people. Substance abuse, boredom, and lack of parenting skills were of real concern for all. The children would wander from very, very early ages and there were few role models or parenting models present. There were very high truancy rates and seemingly little valuing of education.

So on the leadership side, it was a matter of trying to coordinate lots of interagency people to go on to the next step of deciding where we would go with these issues. We joined together. In our small community, we met with DOCS, police, Juvenile Justice, Health, community workers, education, and talked about our kids. We would outline the needs of specific children and say, 'well health, what are you finding? What could you do?' Police were saying 'yes, this one's been petrol sniffing. What are we going to do?' The school would talk to police about individual boys. We'd say, 'they're away for four days, there's a problem in the family, can you follow it up?' We learnt to talk together, to have a whole approach on a whole child. I think that was one of the major things that came out of our program.

New Initiatives from the Interagency Approach

We began to support each other. For example, with nutrition, we had help. We ran classes on preparing simple, cheap, nutritious meals. We had our own school clinic. We had health workers and professionals who came into the school.

We had mental health come in and work on depression. They worked with individual students and with the staff, so that they could develop understandings of the signs of depression.

We put quite a large Vocational Education Program into the school, just so the students could develop an understanding of a work culture. This was necessary because these children saw very few people who ever got up in the morning and went to work or did something that had a monetary reward for it.

We started quite a large permaculture program, so the children could learn to manage and grow some food for themselves. In fact, our agriculture plot became the permaculture garden, and every time I said 'agplot' I was in trouble, because it was now the Food Forest. We employed a consultant to come one day a week to manage the food forest. The kids enjoyed it. They liked to go and have a concrete experience.

As principal, I was able to employ another aboriginal assistant on the permaculture plot. He was an Aboriginal man who would speak about the spirits of the winds and the trees. The program gave him a chance to work with the boys informally, giving them support, while they were digging or moving hay.

We had the TAFE JSST courses. We put in welding, motor mechanics and also a course in basic cookery, which initially the boys all decided they wouldn't do. They just refused to do it because it was new, but by the time I was leaving they were very proud of the fact that they could make and eat significant meals.

We included the Health Living Skills Program and sexual education. The school had a dance group for a time, but it did not continue. We felt that was something we needed to do because the cultural side of dance is very, very important in that community, and it's something the kids could do and enjoy. It was great when it was operating. We also had a language program in the local Aboriginal language. We would have community people come in and work and teach the children their language, and there was a cultural side to it. This was all led by local men coming into the school to teach.

Promotions of School in the Community

These were things that the community meetings asked us to do. They wanted to reinstate education as a pretty good thing to have for kids. We were asked to display our work in our local shop on the corner. We'd go out to the local garage, which was the center of the town, and perform there, so people could see their children and what they achieved.

Cultural camps became a major aspect of the program. My role in leadership with these, was facilitation, nothing else. As principal, I could allow things to happen. We had a community group work together to design cultural camps. They chose where they wanted the children to go, what age groups would be going, where they'd go, who would take them and what the focus would be. The focus may have been dance, it may have been food, it may have been just talking to someone else. They had a different focus for each of the camps and they'd just take the children. The whole thing was run by the community, to address the needs of those boys in our town that didn't have people to talk to.

One of the major issues was that many boys didn't seem to have good friends. Something that was very obvious to us, was that the children didn't play and they didn't talk to each other. On a Friday night or at two o'clock on a Saturday morning, you'd see the boys by themselves and that's when it became dangerous because they weren't communicating, they weren't sharing, they weren't talking. So one of our major emphases was putting people into the school and into their lives, whether it was on camps or at permaculture. We wanted to ensure that there was a chance to talk and to relate to someone else, who could give them some strategies to deal with problems.

The Employment of Welfare Staff at Interagency

Within the school we ran social skills programs and we went from K to 11. We had Stop, Think, Do Programs. I know they're all through the state, and probably through Australia but those skills are really relevant to these kids, because they didn't stop and think, they just did as they'd seen. We had to teach them to stop and think, and process actions, and then the next step was to become aware of other people.

We time-tabled a welfare afternoon. On Tuesday afternoons the community came in and we had eight groups of boys and girls. The welfare teacher and Aboriginal staff members had written the programs for these groups. The staff, with the community, was trained in how to work with students and to get students to talk to them. They were also trained in our child protection procedures. The program was about being a person, feeling good about yourself, living in the local community, and assessing your feelings.

At first the kids thought, 'Oh, this is strange, it's something new, I don't want to do this!' But it became very, very interesting because our attendance statistics showed that on Tuesday afternoons the students were coming back to school. They liked going down to the river and sometimes the community would take them out to the cemetery to show them their people and their connections. So the welfare initiative became one of the main thrusts of our boys' program. The feedback from the community was that the welfare afternoon was really, really important. I did get a lot more feedback from the women, because I ran a girls parallel program to the boys. The women would come back into my office and just talk about it. I found the men would have a de-brief, but they wouldn't share as much of the steps that they were taking with those children.

It is difficult to judge the effect of a program such as this. It may, however, have been a contributing factor to the fact that in my last term at the school of eight suspensions, there was only one boy and all recipients of the School Certificate were male.

Peter Ireland - Biography

Peter is the Deputy Headmaster of Saint Ignatius' College, Riverview at Lane Cove in Sydney. He took up this appointment in 1996. Saint Ignatius College - a Jesuit School in the Ignatian tradition - has an enrolment of 1320 students (boys) from Years 5 to 12, of whom 320 are boarders. There are 122 staff teaching members. The College is widely recognised as the outstanding Independent G.P.S. school in Sydney.

In his administrative capacity at Riverview, he currently manages Curriculum development; best Teaching and Learning Pedagogy; as well as Staff recruitment and Professional Development. He also over-sees the Pastoral Care Program; Technology implementation; and the C-curricular Program. During the eight years previous to 1996, Peter was the Campus Principal at MacKillop Senior College, a progressive co-educational Catholic Senior College at Port Macquarie.

As an educator Peter is a Foundation Committee Member of the Sydney Principal's Institute - a professional body established in 1996 in association with the University of Sydney to support collegial Principal Leadership. In addition he is a Planning Member of the N.S.W. Branch of the Australian Council of Educational Administration, and is serving his eighth year on the Catholic Secondary Schools Association (C.S.S.A.) Higher School Certificate Examination panel for Economics. Testimony to his work in Economics is the current Year 12 text, Fundamentals of Economics - Book Two (Jacaranda press) which he co-authored in 1994.

Peter is a strong advocate for Boys' Education. In 1995 he contributed the book: Boys in Schools (Finch Publications). Drawing on his experience as a principal, classroom teacher, parent of four children and coach, he has presented papers and workshops to schools, parent groups, and national conferences in Brisbane, Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney.

Together with his wife Harriet, Peter is a happy parent of four children - Sally (17), Hannah (12), John (8) and Bede (5).

Peter Ireland - Pastoral Care at St Ignatius' College, Riverview

Although there are currently five major Education Strategies for Boys Education at Riverview the two main focus areas of this presentation are: the "making the Middle Years Matter Programme"; and, our "Anti-Bullying Programme", which was launched at the beginning of the 1999 academic year.

Under pinning the House System of Pastoral Care at Riverview is the belief that "it is essential to place a significant adult in the life of every boy for each of his formation experiences". The Ignatian term 'cura personalis' (care for the individual) permeates this belief.

This significant person is one who knows the boy well, who is interested in him, nurtures his personal and emotional development and loves him. The significant adult in each boy's life adopts them at Year 8; is aware of their strengths, weaknesses, family and friends. They also know them well enough to identify both their vulnerability and areas of confidence.

In most cases the significant adult is each boy's Housemaster. However in some cases it may be a tutor, a coach or even a classroom teacher.

The practice of ensuring that a significant adult plays a meaningful role in each boy's life at Riverview is a characteristic of Jesuit Education. Over the past 17 years the role of this person has probably been the most successful aspect of our pastoral work. It has been during this time that the vertical tutor and house groups have been fully operational.

Supporting our educational mission to develop the 'whole' boy at Riverview is our commitment to providing positive formational experiences that allow each and every boy to utilise and develop his individual talents. It is also built on our acceptance that each boy is uniquely different thereby allowing room for friends to simultaneously develop a unique set of talents alongside each other.

Helping boys Achieve more is one goal of our "Making the Middle Years Matter Programme". At Riverview we have moved very deliberately to address the 'middle years' age group. This is the transition phase encompassing upper primary through to the emerging adolescent at mid-teenage years.

Our intention is to make the middle years of schooling matter as boys progress to young adulthood. Consequently we have quarantined this phase of their schooling (upper primary and junior secondary) in order to deliver deliberate cohort oriented programs in curriculum, pastoral care and sport.

After engaging the expertise of Dr Vivien Eyers from South Australia in 1997, we surveyed our parent body, academic staff and students in an attempt to identify the chief concerns and needs among the emerging adolescent age group.

The survey identified the following concerns:

1. a pattern of gradual disengagement - opting out of formal curriculum experiences.
2. poor organisation and time management skills among boys.
3. a feeling of being overwhelmed or lost in the maze of secondary education
4. inadequate decision making (choice) skills in 'risk' situations
5. lack of opportunities to build trust with a significant adult or parent
6. fractured family structures and their consequences.

The results of this survey mirrored the national profile of boys in this age group across Australia. They represent your concerns as well as mine.

In order to identify the special needs of boys in this particular phase of life we surveyed the students again. With their input the following needs were seen as priorities for students in the middle years:

1. Identity
2. Relationships
3. Engagement in learning
4. Role models
5. Belonging

6. Success
7. Rigour
8. Safety
9. Trust
10. Managed risk taking

So it therefore becomes our responsibility as teachers and administrators in schools to respond to this particular set of physical, cognitive, social, logical and moral needs.

It comes as no surprise to hear that early teenage boys need to have an identity within their family and peer groups. This can give them much needed credibility. If this special identity can be nurtured by a teacher in a classroom, a tutor group, a peer group, a team or a school, then the boy's life and school chances are enhanced.

Growing boys need to feel success in both academic and physical programs. Experiencing a regular sense of success and achievement becomes powerful motivation for continued learning and pushing forward with interest in co-curricular pursuits.

Forming good and meaningful relationships in the teenage years is vital. Those who can, profit emotionally. Those who cannot, often feel unfulfilled and marginalise themselves.

I'm sure parents in your school community will nod in agreement that relationship skills are a special need in the middle years. To advance this argument even further - it is these boys, our emerging adolescents, who will become our men, our fathers and husbands of the future. Men as spouses need to be good at forming, maintaining and contributing to relationships. Skills for this type of relationship need nurturing and practice.

In other words, the relationship these boys eventually have with women should be much more meaningful that the relationship they currently enjoy with their television remote control or Nintendo 64 Playstation!

In addition, we need to carefully devise curriculum experiences that engage boys in the middle years. A curriculum experience built on rigour, challenge and success should spark boys' interest in knowledge, skills and inquiry. Their learning needs to be enthused and inspired. It has now been established that rigour is central to learning in the middle years. Boys tell me often that they enjoy being challenged at the highest level in problem solving, creativity, group work, invention, research or performance.

To provide a significant role model for a growing boy is also an important factor in the way they develop and the values they hold. In each of our schools these positive role models need to be 'tagged', invited, promoted and supported. It could be an uncle if not a father, a friend or neighbour. In our schools they will most often be our coaches, tutors and teachers.

Emerging adolescent boys have called out to us loudly that they need to be trusted and feel as if they belong. All boys want to belong. When a teenage boy feels that he doesn't belong or is marginalised it can end up in the most tragic circumstances.

Boys need to feel a sense of belonging. Hopefully we as teachers and administrators can provide opportunities for them to belong to a team, a class, a tutor group, a house, a family and a school community. This translates into a place or a group where they are accepted for who they are.

Some of them will want to belong to a gang or club. This is simply feeding their natural hunger for belonging. Families usually perform this role but sadly not as often today. If we don't provide belonging at school through a pastoral or curriculum program they will find it somewhere else and perhaps not in the safest or most desirable circumstances.

Exclusion from opportunities to belong can often build resentment in a teenager. This resentment could turn to anger or violence, often jeopardising the safety of themselves or others.

The Riverview response to these teenager needs has been to place a special focus on the middle years of schooling and our pastoral care system. Essentially this has required extra resources in personnel and time along with regular follow-up mechanisms.

Our middle years teaching staff (Years 7 and 8) usually teach a combination of subjects to boys in their home room. This avoids boys bouncing across a typical secondary timetable visiting up to ten different teachers every couple of days as they did previously. Our middle school home-room teachers teach at least three courses to each of their home-room boys - this allows sufficient time and opportunity to develop a learning relationship together.

Developing a learning relationship allows boys to get to know and trust someone who they can take a risk with someone with whom they can trust sufficiently to discuss their inhibitions, what they cannot do, or cannot yet understand. This saves them losing face – a boy's worst fear!

One implication of adopting home-room teachers in the middle school who teach a combination of say English, History and Geography is the need to provide them with support and in-service. Consequently we reduced their allocated face-to-face teaching load (five periods) and replaced it with time for individual student/teacher interviews.

At the middle school level, we wanted to pepper some of the curriculum units with the "Meyer" key competencies. This would also have the advantage (for students!) of teachers developing new strategies for teaching and learning in their classrooms. For too long the traditional timetable has been a convenient excuse for unprepared teachers to 'arrive and dump'... 'arrive and dump'... then disappear every 40 minutes. New middle school curriculum and delivery strategies brings with it the possibility of re-vitalising the classroom learning process.

The 1990's sent out a clear signal to educators. This message was that the curriculum units in the years of middle schooling are 'tired'. In order to develop a program of units, which are relevant, challenging and meaningful, and which incorporate digital technology, some of the 'tired' units should be abandoned and replaced with relevant life serving units delivered with the assistance of digital technology

One aim of our middle school strategic plan is to track students thoroughly. By building up a comprehensive profile on aspects of each boy's personal life, academic progress, behavioural pattern, friendship groups and co-curricular pursuits in sport and culture we believe we can be more interventionist in identifying and avoiding potential problems before they develop into chronic patterns. In other words by carefully tracking every dimension of a boy's life and formation and recording it on a database for the home-room teacher and housemaster, fewer boys will be able to slip through the net. This initiative also provides a comprehensive reporting mechanism to parents.

To establish an effective middle school that is accepted and owned by the entire college staff, it requires a slight shift in philosophy. This can unsettle staff members who are concerned that such change may erode standards or require new approaches to teaching. To address this legitimate concern, it becomes a worthwhile exercise to have the 'generalist' teacher (home-room) versus the 'specialist' teacher conversation or debate.

Initially, Key Learning Area Directors were understandably reluctant to give the responsibility of teaching English, History, Geography and even Religious Education to a 'generalist' single teacher model in Years 7 and 8.

Subsequent discussions identified the advantage to learning of establishing a relationship between each boy and his teacher. This could be adequately done under the 'generalist' model where the home-room teacher might teach the boy in at least three of his courses.

Such a model allows home-room teachers to know each student's strengths, weaknesses, fears, skills, learning gaps and personal qualities. Having a solid relationship sets up a readiness to learn and add value to the boy's set of skills.

A further component of effective middle schooling is the attraction of good middle school team members. To this end the college administration provided both release time and financial incentives as well as a definite career path by creating promotion positions within the middle school.

Further to this, the college administration commenced a promotion of middle schooling through parent forums, staff meetings, college newsletters and the school website. Information nights for boys and parents in the middle years were scheduled in the preparation phase.

Another major steep in "Making the Middle Years Matter" was to establish a separate middle school precinct in the college which consisted of their own classrooms, recreation space, lockers and meeting areas. This was their safety area from which they can move in and out, but seniors entered only by invitation.

In 2000 we hope to enhance our middle school plans by establishing a City Experience / Bush Experience. This will be a challenging programme by its nature and one which we hope will engage the boys.

In line with Peter Hill's VSQP research (University of Melbourne-1997), the success of our "Making the Middle Years Matter" initiative will ultimately depend on the quality and commitment of the home-room teacher. To this end we searched for transformational teachers.

These are the teachers who can turn a students'

self doubt	into	confidence
solemn rooms	into	happy learning environment
control	into	autonomy and independence
loneliness	into	belonging
despair	into	satisfaction
natural curiosity	into	understanding
awkwardness	into	skills
confusion	into	clarity
isolated learning	into	partnership

These teachers are those on your staff with a real vocation to teach. They are the people who love working with boys, who love stretching them intellectually and who can convert physical and mental clumsiness into confident and articulate young men.

Our second major focus for today is to look at how Saint Ignatius' College is attempting to change the culture of relationships between boys in the school. The issue here is HARASSMENT AND BULLYING. Currently on the national agenda, the issue of bullying in schools seems to get widespread coverage on television, print media and talk-back radio.

The more subtle forms of bullying are often the most damaging. Physical bullying rarely occurs, however the typical school environment of classrooms, lockers, corridors, playground, toilets and gymnasium can sometimes be the venue for unpleasant harassment. Rod West (former Trinity Grammar Headmaster) said that "the measure of a good school is how well it looks after its weakest member." Therefore we all have a special responsibility to look after lonely boys or boys who get teased – those boys who get off a bus in the morning and search for somewhere to go, something to occupy themselves with, or perhaps even a group that they can belong to.

Bullying defined is:

> *"repeated aggression, physical or psychological, of a less powerful individual by a more powerful individual or group. A power imbalance which makes the ill-treatment of a victim possible"* (Rigby 1995)

By using Ken Rigby's survey instrument in 1996 our students identified forms of difference at Riverview which were sometimes the motivation for unprovoked bullying to take place.

The forms of difference included:

1 age

2 skin colour

3 interests

4 size

5 talents

6 location of home

7 clothes/shoe styling

8 looks/appearance

9 sports pursued

10 opinions

11 possessions

Similarly we were able to identify the forms that bullying can take in the college environment. These included

1 name calling
2 spreading rumours
3 pushing
4 leaving people out of games or groups
5 ridiculing
6 hiding bags/books
7 teasing
8 damaging possession
9 putting other down
10 physical violence or threats

Perhaps one of the most prominent forms of bullying was leaving people out... .. excluding them, and leaving them on the edge.

In the rush of the moment a student complaint about bullying can often by dismissed by a busy or insensitive teacher. As a result we have tried to reduce the easy dismissal of bullying by avoiding the following "fob-me-off" responses among teachers.

- "Don't worry about it"
- "They're probably just joking"
- "He's in a stirring mood to-day"
- "He will grow out of it"
- "Go and sit somewhere else"
- "Don't listen to them"
- "He'll grow up one day... forget about it"

These are the sorts of things that you may hear your staff say. I've been guilty of this myself on occasion in the past. However it is no longer good enough to accept and legitimise bullying with such "turn-a-blind-eye" comments.

In order to advance our campaign to build a school community in which bullying is minimised the college adopted specific leadership strategies spread over two phases. The initial phase concentrated on promoting the right climate. This was an awareness raising exercise.

Against this background the following steps involved:

1 Participate in a national survey instrument which identified "concerns" and "needs"

2 Establish a "respect for difference" Committee

3 Promote a whole school "hands-off" Policy

4 Develop a College Policy addressing

- Harassment and Bullying. This policy should be developed in sympathy with the student .
- Code of Conduct Policy Expectations and Rights and Responsibilities: consequences.

5 Promulgate a code of conduct which is transparent for all staff/boys and parents.

6 Promote a culture which is quick to identify and report incidents of Bullying

7 Have specific strategies and consequences in place to deal with all levels of Bullying.

The follow-up leadership phase to address Bullying in the College was more practical.

It involved the following steps.

1 Brainstorm Day for key staff Counsellors and external Psychologists

2 Commission a 12 minute video production which sends a strong message about "Belonging to a School Community" and "Respect

for Difference" and which clearly depicts forms of bullying as well as strategies for victims of bullying

3 Write and publish a manual to accompany the Video

4 Schedule a training day for Housemasters and key staff to be facilitators of the Anti-Bullying Programme

5 Schedule parent/son evenings for every year group (compulsory attendance) to explain the policy and strategies to accompany the Anti-Bullying Programme.

It is now the practice for every new family, new student or staff member who joins the College Community to undertake a 30 minute seminar /inservice on the rationale, practical application and goals of the Anti-Bullying Programme. This is advocated under the banner of "Belonging to our School Community"

Thank you

Case Studies B

Raising Boys' Achievement

Fred Carosi

A Decade of Working Consistently at Boys' Education

Helene Boyer

Role Models and School Support Structures for Rural Boys

Ian Lillico

Empowering Boys

Fred Carosi - Biography

Fred is presently the Principal of Kogarah High School. He has held this position for just over a year. Prior to this he was leading teacher at Canterbury Boys High, an inner city Sydney High School. He has been teaching for 26 years and for the last 20 years has worked in boy's schools both selective and comprehensive.

Fred has a strong student welfare background and a particular interest in gender equity with a focus on improving educational and social outcomes for boys. As such, he was highly involved in establishing programs, restructuring and changing curriculum to make education more relevant for boys at Canterbury Boys High. The success the school achieved in this area has been encouraging to him.

Fred Carosi - A Decade of Working Consistently at Boys' Education

In a way I'm starting again at Kogarah High School. I was at boys' schools for about twenty years and I've now been at Kogarah for a year. It's a co-ed high school and for me having gone through working with boys for such a long time, coming back to a co-ed school presents some interesting problems. This time I've come back as principal whereas at Canterbury Boys I was a leading teacher. It's remarkable how you can do more as a leading teacher or deputy than you can as a principal. So we might explore that a bit but I think we should also explore the issue of 'if it's good enough for the girls then it should work for the boys'. As you know, I don't think it works that way and I'll take a couple of examples from Kogarah High School and the way that we're starting to manage change there.

Discipline

I'll start off with a little bit on discipline because most people seem to have that at the back of their minds. At Kogarah High School the system that we work under there is not too bad. It's a solid discipline system. It's got all the elements that would make a good discipline system. It's got a good reward system, it's got a reasonable amount of consistency but not as much as we would like at this stage. We've also got this classroom plan where theoretically people that step out of line are caught and processed. Teachers and students know it's there, action is taken, and any further action needed. Just a quick look at that would tell me there are certain things wrong there and certainly it would tell you something about boys under this system.

What do you think happens? Well, exactly what you'd predict under this sort of system. Yes, boys get caught. If you look at the categories of offences, you'd notice they were essentially put there to deal with the boys. If you do some statistics about your suspensions, and you should, because they're good indicators, then you will see this. In term one this year 92% of suspensions were boys. There was only one girl suspended out of about eleven people suspended in term one. Boys represented 81% last year. So this system works really well for some people.

If you look at the reasons, the reasons were fighting, verbal abuse, persistent disobedience and gender harassment. No surprises, right? If we look at peer mediation that involved negotiation skills, there were eleven people trained only one of those people was male. If you look at reading, we did a lot of reading tests and boys were way down. So it doesn't take a genius to work out that under this system that we're running now at my school, the boys are not being supported in the way that they should be or the way that I think they should be.

Principles for Action

Approaching it in that way, it is not that hard then to try and start to shift people in action. What we're starting to do now is to have a look at what works, and whether the girls do complain about boys doing the wrong thing and stopping their learning. So what are we going to do? We're looking at some basic principles that I'm sure are no surprise to you either.

The first principle is that it is important in working with boys to have a clear discipline policy focusing on self-discipline and an ethos of negotiation and positive reinforcement. That's one of our basic principles. Now we're going to try and put it into place, not take away what's there, but revamp it to take some of these principles into account.

The second principle which I think is really, really important is: agreed-upon rules of procedure make conflict less likely and tends to distribute teacher-student power more evenly. Given the relationship between power and dominant forms of masculinity it may be a critical issue for boys. The easiest test is what happens if you shout at a boy. If you approach a subject or issue in an aggressive way, that's precisely what you get back. Agreed-upon rules of procedure will take away that sense of conflict between teacher and the student. It does work because at my time at Canterbury Boys it did work very successfully and I know it works. So I'm confident we can marry the two.

With those principles in mind I think we need to go one step further. The step is a crucial one and that is, how do we support boys given those behaviours? How do we support boys through the curriculum? For a long time boys' education has not looked at the curriculum in the sense the programs we run. What we're going to do is introduce into the curriculum a plan where we deal with some of the issues that we need to deal with (i.e. behaviour and social development). One of the associated issues that we have is, what about the girls while you're doing this? Some of these programs overlap and when the boys are working on certain issues like anger management the girls will be working on something else. So we're going to have two programs which dovetail. At some stages they'll be together, at some stages they'll be apart. In a lot of cases they will be apart. It will be run through the Personal Development Program which in NSW of course, is one period of PD and two of PE per week. It works reasonably well through that structure. In this way we're supporting both boys and girls but we are supplying boys with some very important skills. We know what they do that gets them into trouble, we've got to support them and see how we can get around it.

Building Boys' Reading

The second issue that I'd like to look at is the issue of reading. When I first got to Kogarah High School I noticed very quickly, as you would in your own schools, that girls were pretty good borrowers. If you went to the library records, and it's interesting to do, who borrowed the books? The girls did. In class, who read the books? The girls did and so on. We needed some sort of scheme where we engaged the boys and at the same time benefited the girls as well. We did come up with a take-home reading scheme that worked successfully at Canterbury Boys High School. It translates to any situation and the features of that scheme are in your notes. (A description of Fred's work at Canterbury High School, including a description of the reading scheme appears in *The Boys in Schools Bulletin* Vol. 4 No. 4 1998)

The essential thing is that we give boys success in reading. That means they are given books that are levelled at their own reading age. They take those home and they read with their parents, preferably with their dads but not necessarily. Or if they can't read with their parents they can certainly tell them the story. We have a large non-English speaking background population at both Canterbury and Kogarah.

Giving students success in those areas that we want to promote is basic as far as I am concerned. In the past we have given kids the boys' books, but they can't really read them if they're at the inappropriate level. They don't read them. As a student why would you punish yourself with something that you can't do? If we take quick look at some of those results in a pre and post test in a Year 7 class you can see enormous shifts.

Reading Age	Pre-Test	Post-Test
5	1	1
6	6	2
7	5	4
8	13	11
9	8	4
10	14	8
11	20	14
12	13	14
13	8	23
14+	4	11
Total	92	92

There were some boys in that scheme that read up to one hundred books in about nine months. So for me, it's not a question whether boys like to read or not, it's a question of how you approach it and what you give them to read. In this scheme they selected a lot of their books themselves but the crucial thing was that they were matched to the text. The scheme also benefits schools greatly by involving all students in a reading culture. Those who like to read and read consistently anyway are not excluded from the process.

Tracking Progress

In the discipline scheme at Canterbury Boys that started in 1989, 9% of the population ended up at the end process of the discipline system (the Blue Room). In 1991 and 1992 it went down to 7.8%. If you were at the school you'd be worried about that. The figures are not going anywhere, you're holding your ground. So what happened to make it fall?

What happened was that we had a really close look at the curriculum in two ways. Firstly the delivery. Our teaching strategies were an issue for boys. It's a big area and we don't have time to explore it at the moment but it's a very important issue. Secondly, what we were delivering and the sort of courses that were being offered. That included the program I referred to earlier about anger management, emotional literacy etc.

Now, back to the discipline figures. Here are the percentages of the total student body placed in the Blue Room (the end point of our discipline system). There was a steady decline until 1995 and then something went wrong.

Percentage of student body placed in Blue Room							
1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
9.0	7.8	7.8	7.8	6.3	4.6	7.1	3.0

I love this table because it always reminds me of the things that we need to do and keep doing. In 1995 the incoming Year 7's were not properly educated about the agreed-upon rules of procedures. They weren't put through the system in the way that the previous groups had and immediately suspensions shot back up to 7.1%. We rectified that the next year and it went down to 3% and it's remained pretty much at 3%.

Evaluation, monitoring and keeping statistics really are important and give you a way of looking at what's happening so you can investigate. The essential point of those figures is that unless you attack a variety of areas, the one-off interventions won't do. You're just not going to get very far if you just have a program. If you just have a reading program you're not going to get to the essential things. You need to have a look at a total picture about your curriculum, about the way that it's delivered, what it says. Some of the programs about emotions and gender construction, the boys really enjoy that. And it doesn't hurt the girls to have a look at how gender is constructed as far as they're concerned either or how genders are constructed for boys. They're useful sort of things to do.

If we look at the reactions of the staff at Canterbury Boys we can chart the number of days lost. In 1992 there were 223 individual days excluding the long-term absences. In 1993, it was 194 and by 1994 it was down to 139 and it sort of stayed there pretty much after that. A happy staff, a happy school.

Qualities of Boys' Education Leadership

The issue of leadership is an important one for me personally because I've gone from a position of being a leading teacher where it was hands on. I was really involved with the kids, the teachers and the programs. I did the evaluations with a group of people, kept the statistics and so on. In actual fact I probably was able to do a lot more when I was a leading teacher then I am as a principal.

I now look back and think about what was it that worked with my previous boss. No matter the issue, strong education and leadership are consistently identified as a key category of effective change. I don't think any of us would question that. It's just how we do it that sometimes gets in the way. But the principal really does have a crucial role in that leadership scheme and when I look back to my days at Canterbury I have quickly jotted down a few things.

The principal was a supportive person. But more than that, he was overtly committed to boy's education. Being a boys' school I suppose that makes it a little bit easier but none the less he overtly supported the programs. He was a practical person, not expecting too much and starting with things that really worked. That was what he always said, "Look, get a couple of successes going and then we'll talk".

Adequate resourcing: I did a survey with boys at Canterbury and then I went to Barry McKenzie, the principal and said, "Barry, my surveys show that food technology will get about five or six classes if we offer it". He looked at me, didn't take long, and he said, "Okay. What do we need to do?" So we investigated the possibility of converting a science lab to a food tech lab. That cost $75,000 bucks. Now you don't have to go to that extreme I suppose, but it highlights the fact that if you don't make it a high priority, if you're not willing to put the resources into it, it's not probably going to take off as it should.

Lastly, there was a sound philosophical understanding of the issues. I think that as leaders, all of us in this room, we really need to make sure that we're clear about our understandings of gender and where it should go. For me that was a base, a springboard, and that philosophy then permeates through the rest of the executive and down it goes.

The other factor that impacted as significantly on these successful programs was taking a whole school approach. You know what happens if it's fragmented.

We used a designer approach in that we looked at different aspects and we developed a plan. One senior executive, myself, was responsible for the programs so we had direct responsibility at a reasonably high level. We were also really good at identifying what we called change agents: those people on staff that you know are keen to change, that will go the extra little bit. After identifying those people, we really got them involved.

Essentially at Kogarah High School I don't have a leading teacher, I have a deputy but no leading teacher. Therefore, that point becomes even more important for me at the moment. In fact, I am in the process I guess, of one of my staff serving an apprenticeship, so that they can take up that role that I use to fill at Canterbury Boys in the area of boys' education and he's doing extremely well. It's all that sort of grooming that you need to think about because as principal I really cannot go out and do the things that I used to. I get tied up in the office with paperwork, don't I? So do you.

In my discussion with some of you the key question was, "Well, where do we start?" A good starting point I found is positive modelling, staff modelling. Teachers are really good models and kids do notice what we do. So if you want a starting point, positive modelling is really good for the staff. Basically what we did was to ask teachers in cross faculty groups, what staff qualities do we want to model as a group? They came up with those for the school, for both girls and boys. They're important.

In fact I think it's essential to start with the staff. If you don't get them going they're not going to provide experiences in their classrooms which will have the philosophy that you want to get across. It's not a difficult thing, it doesn't take long and it's a really positive thing to do with staff.

The more sophisticated or I suppose the more long term process is to have a look at something like the areas nominated by Rollo Browne (see Browne, R. 1995 'Schools and the Construction of Masculinity', in *Boys in Schools,* eds R. Browne & R. Fletcher, Finch , Sydney). It's probably not a perfect model but it is one you can use to work out what you might do. What we did was that we broke up the areas and staff were asked, "Well, how do we rate on some of these?" Do we do it well? Or, we don't do it well and we need to change. And then we had a look at those areas. That was a really positive way of approaching the issues.

But the first step most definitely would be to start with the staff and modelling. The second step is to get the kids involved. Get them to make their own rules, agreed rules. If they make them they are responsible for them.

Boys -only vs Co-ed

Lastly, a comment on the difference between the two systems of boys-only schools and in co-ed. As far as boys were concerned their behaviours at Kogarah were basically the same behaviours that they exhibited at Canterbury Boys. They were still aggressive, they still stood up to teachers and talked back and so forth. If anything a bit calmer at Kogarah because, in my school, I forgot to mention that 60% are girls which is a very unusual situation in NSW schools. Even so that group of boys dominates. I don't see a great difference in their behaviour. I don't see a great difference in the management of them as I did when I was at an all boys school. What we do differently at Kogarah though, is that we do separate them in some classes. In Science they go to separate classes. It's what we do to promote science with girls. In PD classes they will split according to the issue. So we manage them differently in that way but that's about it. I don't think that boys are that different when in a co-ed school.

Thank you.

Helene Boyer - Biography

Helene is currently the Principal of Deloraine Primary School in northern Tasmania. During the last two years she was at Campbell Town District High, a Kindergarten to Grade 11 school in the northern midlands.

Helene's original training was in secondary teaching (English, Speech & Drama) but she has been a teacher in Grade 11/12 colleges as well as secondary schools, a performing arts adviser for primary and secondary schools and a principal of both primary and secondary sectors. She was a founder of Gambit Theatre Company in Launceston, one of the longest running young people's theatres in Australia. She has been a lecturer in curriculum studies for teachers in training at the University of Tasmania and her Masters of Education thesis explored the views of males undertaking Year 11/12 dance courses.

She is a mother of a 12 year-old boy, a stepmother of a 21 year-old man, and her husband is a secondary teacher.

Helene Boyer - Role Models and School Support Structures for Rural Boys

I think this is one of the most exciting times to be in education and what we're doing is the most incredible action research. And we're doing it as a grass roots kind of movement. We're not doing it out of theory into practice. We're doing the practice into theory. And therefore I can describe what we're doing now; what we're learning; what insights we're getting; and what we might do in the future.

I'm going to tell you a story that comes broadly from the context that I worked in for part of 1996 and 1997/1998. I worked firstly in kindergarten to Grade 10, but now Grade 11, in a school in the northern Midlands region of Tasmania with a predominately lower socioeconomic demographic, where the rural recession hit very hard.

Helene used an outline of a child, to which she attached labels to illustrate her story to the audience. She pointed out that this story was not meant to represent an actual person or family but were drawn from a range of typical situations encountered in the school's context.

Now this is the story of 'K' not the story of 'O'! K was born the eldest child in their family and the family that he came into had a history of inter-generational early school leaving and illiteracy as a result of this. They were a rural, casual farm-labouring family. There was a lot of parental unemployment in this family. This family was caught in the poverty trap.

The family has a history of violence, domestic violence but also violence among the siblings and between members of the extended family. Alcohol and drug abuse was endemic to not only this particular family unit but to the extended friendship and family group. If you live in a place with lots of open spaces and a few animals hanging around in it, and there's nothing much else to do, you have a 'huntin, fishin, rootin, tootin' type culture.

And I'm deliberately using that kind of language because one of the issues we're dealing here with is that we can not be middle class about the judgments we make. The language people use is about their life and their perspectives.

K did not have a lot of care and control in his life. Like many of the children in the area he roamed and didn't have curfews. He didn't have routines, and he was expected to operate fairly independently from an early age. When K was five there was family breakdown. Mum and dad split. As a result K had a period of three or four years of interrupted schooling, where he moved between maybe three or four schools.

If you're a primary principal and you want to look at some of the concerns and the case histories of children with behaviour management or learning needs, if you go back and look at the Kinder /Prep/ Grade 1 years you will probably find that there was interrupted schooling there.

K, because there was interrupted schooling at a very important time, had low literacy and numeracy skills. K developed a pattern of absenteeism. K was hanging around with people a lot older than he was, because there weren't a lot of the peer group who were also out of school and hanging around. He became involved in theft and therefore attracted police attention. Strangely, K had low self-esteem. K also had a lot of anger. K rejected the structures and the frameworks that he saw other people engaging in because there was no way that he could access it. K began to engage in behaviours of self abuse: risk taking, early drug taking, violence, deliberate aggressive behaviour in order to get an aggressive response. If you can't get noticed, a good way is to become aggressive and then you'll get noticed.

So this is K. K actually is a really nice boy. We really liked him. But the male role models in this boy's life were not what we would hope for a child learning how to be an adult.

When K came to our attention he was in Grade 8. We decided that there were some things that we could do. We could build a relationship with him where there was trust and where we got to know him. We could offer K support. By now, he had gone from mum to dad quite regularly and he had no fixed abode. He went to live with an uncle who was an alcoholic. He came to us one day and said 'Look, I can't actually live with him anymore, I can't stand it.' And so support meant that we accessed the various community agencies so that he actually had a place to live and some money. He ended up living with one of the school's ancillary staff.

We asked ourselves about his role models. We decided on the kind of mentor that we might've had in our school for him. I went out and found this person, not just for K but for other boys in our school. He was a beginning teacher but had worked in the aluminum industry for a long time and then decided on a career change. He was not a stereotype of a teacher. He rides a Harley, he has a ponytail, he's very up front about stuff, he's also very industry related. He called me 'boss', for example because he said this is how he showed his respect for the role of authority.

We wanted to make an education plan for this student, because some of these things I've outlined, schools can do absolutely nothing about. Schools are not able to overcome all these things. This is a community problem, not just a school problem. But we can do something about their education plan, because if we don't, then we're failing. That's what we're good at. The way we did it with somebody who felt that they had no power over anything, was to give them some power to negotiate. We say to the student, 'The school believes you need to be literate and be numerate. You say though you don't like doing certain things and you won't, fair enough. Let's do some trading. Let's build a plan that's based around your needs but also has got some trade-offs so that everybody wins in the situation.'

We build on this boy's strengths. For some boys it could be sport. So we built on the things he was really good at. He was good at horses and he was also good at farm work and labouring and he also was very good with young children. He really loved his child-care sessions and he became a games leader in the primary playground. We built up his resilience and coping skills. We wanted him, and others, to have more power over how they control their lives rather than us just doing it for them.

This boy actually got this thing called 'hope'. It was critically important. Most of us probably wouldn't know what it was like not to have it. He got choices. Don't think that he suddenly became this wonderful student and stayed in education. He didn't. At fifteen, at the beginning of Grade 10, he came to us and said 'I'm leaving the town'. When we asked why, he said, 'Because if I stay here I will never get out and I will be my father'. He took himself off to a very isolated area in the south and lived on a horse stud. He has not been in education again. Occasionally he just comes back and says hello to the mentor teacher that he had the very good relationship with, and tells him how his life is going. So that's the story of K.

Even though I'm currently a primary school principal, my heart is still in the secondary area because I think adolescence is the toughest time to be alive. They need every friend they can get and I think it's time that we turned over the old factory model of secondary education and made it a totally different kind of animal.

The early years, the research at the moment about brain development suggests, is the area we need to address next. The research shows that if the first five years of life have 'Not gone well', then the brain development has been irrevocably changed and therefore the patterns of emotional response of a human being have been largely set. Now if that's the case putting the interventions in at Grade 8 or 9 is not the answer. It's about preschool and it's about early schooling, which is now where I'm starting to work in, being a primary school principal. It's about offering alternatives and different ways of relating to, particularly boys, but some of our girls as well.

There are very interesting ideas around class and around gender in communities and it's up to us to think through what they mean for us, and for education. We have come up with courses in anger management and conflict resolution, but at the moment I'm not seeing the transference into real life. And I think that's a really interesting thing for us as educators to consider how we might help that transference.

The school cannot expect to cope with this problem alone. Violence in the school belongs to the community. It is not just the school's problem. We must have, as Dan Offord says, 'unconditional positive regard' for students and that means as leaders going out and making sure that community and health services and governments and all the other things that our taxes pay for, work in conjunction with our education programs. Even though schools are pushing the edges of social justice here we cannot keep doing it alone.

Ian Lillico - Biography

Ian is currently the Principal of Bullsbrook District High School in the Swan Education District. Prior to this he was Principal of Eastern Goldfields Senior High School in Kalgoorlie. Ian has been with the Education Department of WA for 25 years and has held the positions of Teacher, Head of Department (Mathematics), Deputy Principal and Principal in both rural and metropolitan Western Australia.

Ian has also been seconded to the Curriculum Branch of EDWA twice, where he was responsible for a number of texts as well as the introduction of the Unit Curriculum for Mathematics. In 1995, Ian won a position in the School Leadership Placement Program at Central Office as a consultant with the Personnel 2000 Project. He also spent 12 months as a temporary lecturer at Nedlands College where he lectured in Mathematics and Computing. While there, he became an accredited Teaching Practice Adviser and has served on the Professional Practice Advisory Committee of Edith Cowan University.

Ian has shown a particular interest in boys' education since he was Acting Principal of Governor Stirling Senior High School for 2 years (1992-1993), and began to notice the comparative poor performance of boys in all facets of schooling, ranging from academic results to citizenship and behaviour. He has undertaken action research since then in a number of schools, read widely on the topic and delivered addresses on the subject in the country and metropolitan area.

Ian travelled to New Zealand in 1997 where he taught at Pukekohe High School near Auckland, and visited a number of other schools to research what strategies were working for boys in New Zealand. Last year he visited South Australia, New South Wales and Tasmania to further research the issues surrounding the under performance of boys and find examples of best practise among the 15 schools he visited.

He has recently produced a brief discussion paper entitled "Boys' Learning" for the Swan Education District, which is particularly aimed at Western Australia.

Ian Lillico - Empowering Boys

One of the unique aspects of secondary schools in Western Australia is that when a student enters Year 8 we often lose them very quickly. They can have up to fifteen teachers, they go around to maybe ten or twelve rooms and we lose them very quickly. They carry their bag on their back and that's their stability, that's their territory. They've lost the home teacher that they had in the primary school for many years. So the pecking order in the class changes all the time as they change teachers and rooms. I did find that boys outside WA were more settled and adaptable. Having visited New Zealand and talked to people over there, it looks as though the boys are least feral over that way and as you move further west they become unusual creatures. If we're talking about boys' education, Western Australia is probably the extreme. So we've got a problem.

The issue of the teacher is the critical one, as we all know. It's not really the Mathematics or the English or the Science or how well you wrote on the board, it's what kind of warmth you gave to the kid that's important. Those teachers are the people that the students remember. In our in-servicing in Western Australia one of the things that we stress most importantly is the teacher. Steve Biddulph says 'boys learn teachers and not subjects'. I found that talking to boys around Australia in particular, there was a very high correlation with how well they did in the subject and whether that they thought the teacher cared for them as a person. And that was wherever I went. Without a good teacher-student relationship or if a boy perceives the teacher doesn't care for him and it can be just one incident, one put down, then the boy can wipe off that teacher and that subject for maybe the whole year. And that's a real problem.

Touch

Judging by media reports, WA must be the centre of paedophilia in the world. Teacher training institutions are telling trainees that when they go out, they should keep a metre away from every kid in case they are accused of some kind of molestation. It's ridiculous. We see for example from the book 'Boys In Schools', that for boys, the more disturbed they are, the more they're craving some sort of touch, some kind of recognition. It doesn't have to be in front of the whole class, just walking past on a one to one basis, just a little tap on the back, not to take the wind out of him, or just a grip of the arm, you know, 'Well done!' On a one to one basis makes a big difference and that's one thing that we're actually saying to teachers. I have actually said it to our Director General; 'we've lost that sense of touch and it's critical'. In some families, these days of course, the males don't touch their sons from about the age of two or three, they try to toughen the boys up and the father doesn't even kiss them.

Ownership

Another issue is empowerment and boys taking on more responsibility. I've talked to student counsellors around Australia and most are ineffective. They may be able to organise a school ball or one or two other things but they're not really power groups. In Western Australia in my middle school, and I'll talk about it in a minute, the student council basically says how they want the thing to run. They have to be given real power and boys also need to play a part in deciding school and individual rules. If they do that, they take more ownership for that, and although their punishments are often more harsh than we dish out, they'll actually stick to them.

Another step would be to get rid of most of the schoolyards that I saw. They're the most sterile things that you've ever imagined. I went to some wonderful schools with lovely green pastures and bits and pieces, mainly in Tasmania, it was fantastic. But some of our schools look like prisons and people wonder why there's the graffiti and the lack of respect for property. With few exceptions the schools that had very nice surroundings and even reasonable toilets with paper and tiles, the kids actually looked after them. And that's an issue that really we have to look at.

There is not enough privacy for students, not enough seating. What I've done in Bullsbrook with my Year 7's and 8's (last year of primary school and the first year of high school), is give them a common room. Normally you have to wait until you are just about leaving school to get a common room, but my Year 7's and 8's have got one. Not with secondhand stuff but new furniture. They've got a coffee and tea machine, milo or whatever, and they've got music and they're looked after. I insist that my teachers have lunch with them at least once a fortnight. The whole reason we had yard duty was to get to know the kids, but as we know in many schools we're just basically policemen, because it's such a sterile environment. So I'm saying have a common room and occasionally go in there and have lunch with the students.

One other thing about breaks that I've found from my work in Kalgoorlie. We need to restrict the free time at breaks. The longer the kids sit or stand looking at each other in these sterile conditions, the more antagonism goes on. That's when all the bullying, the harassment and the put downs start. Rather than having a small recess and a long lunch, a lot of schools are now having an early lunch and a late lunch to try to restrict the amount of time that students are out there trying to make trouble. Also, give them their own territory, have organised activities. Again at Bullsbrook, the middle school is trying different things. Drafts in one room, there's music in another, there's a bit of debating.

Technology Isn't Always Fantastic

The Commonwealth Government has poured a lot of money into computer technology. I think they're going to be regretting it in terms of boys. My own three boys, in particular, have taken to technology very well. Girls often don't get a look in. But the stuff that they're doing is rubbish. I mean you might have a machine there, and you say we're doing great things for technology, but in fact, it's actually reducing the oral communication even more. On the chat lines, when they're talking to each other, a lot of teachers say, 'Well, at least they're communicating'. But the language and the lack of any kind of English, the very, very quick to and fro-ing that goes on, is actually not doing very much. I'm saying be careful about it. Don't just think because you've got fantastic technology that you're going to have a great time. I think the boys have taken to it very well, but many will just sit in front of a screen forever.

I've suggested to many teachers that if they actually videotape their lesson and put their lesson on the screen, the boys will respond to it better. Research I conducted in Western Australia found that up to 40% more is absorbed using lighting and a big television screen. Some say it sounds ludicrous, but if you can do that, you'll actually make things more exciting.

Role Models

Many boys don't see their father reading so there's obviously not much of a role model. 'Males don't read'. And libraries are becoming very female domains. The males that do go in there look for practical kind of books on how to fix a car or some other kind of very easy reading magazine. We certainly do need to have males in schools but it's not a simplistic cure-all. Every male is a role model. It doesn't matter who they are on the staff, very often it's the gardener or the cleaner or someone who some of the boys will relate to. Males do have that responsibility and have to realise that students watch their mannerisms very carefully. One of my three children comes home and tells me what car Mr so and so drove, who was in the car with him, where the dents were, how fast he left the car park and all those types of things. They're watching us very carefully and they're taking on and cloning lots of the bits and pieces that we're doing. I think we underestimate that. It certainly is reinforcing for boys, especially in the primary schools, not so much that they don't have a male teacher, but that teaching is not a male profession. Males are not going into teaching because they're not seeing males teaching, except in the secondary and that also is reducing.

I've found the best teachers of boys in Australia are women with little doubt. More nurturing, more caring and able to also assert more discipline. So just having more men in schools is not the answer. It's the right type of men; or training the people that are there, in a few techniques in terms of dealing with boys. It doesn't matter whether they are a father or not.

Empowerment at Bullsbrook

The main principle of middle school at Bullsbrook is student empowerment. They basically run it. It involves cooperation and respect with their teachers, creativity and initiative, a family caring atmosphere and it's student outcomes driven. There is also a parent council. Middle school consists of five classes, three Year 7's and two Year 8's, and each has their own home room. Their classroom is their own. When the bell goes they don't have to get out into the playground. They can take out their lunch or their recess or whatever they're going to have and eat it in the room and drink in the room. 'Heresy', you might think. They also have their own locker because of the number of times that I've had complaints about calculators and other things being stolen. They've got their own common room. They've got microwaves, a fridge, but not television. They've got basically everything else and it's their area. No other class is allowed into their classroom, even if it's vacant for half a day.

On Fridays they are with their home teacher all day. Fridays are basically not timetabled. The whole middle school, a total of about 120 students, can actually go on some kind of excursion and they can do active learning. In terms of boys it's a holistic framework which is particularly relevant. The whole student matters. The subject allocation doesn't rule, the secondary timetable doesn't rule, it's the student. I frequently say to schools that the first thing to do is to get your computerised timetable and throw it out the door. Having everything revolve around the subject is the worst thing you could do. Timetables suggest that the subject is the unit of education and the kids have to fit the subject. It's got to be reversed. Throw it out and start building your school around the student and what you want from the student and let the subject serve that. That is a very important thing to get across.

To recap, empowerment is essential for motivating boys and I support those student counsellors as much as I can when they come with a request (as long as it's not $100,000). Territorial stability is essential, teachers get to know each student very well. We have workshops on a Friday on bullying, sexuality, outcomes etc. and it works very well. Because it is non-timetabled we can actually do quite a lot of things. Lastly, there is a strong parent/teacher link. Parents can come to the school at any time and for a high school that's a rarity. Fathers come in and do clubs which is great and I try to encourage as many fathers as I can to be involved. As I said Fridays are for active learning styles.

Leadership is Contact

I find principals have got very tied up in paperwork. There's no doubt about that. We could spend all day just opening the mail. We lose a bit of the educational leadership. I think it's critical, although difficult, for us to actually be around in the classroom. We need to show the student that he is not just working for that one teacher which is what they tend to think. They're working for all of us and we need to show them that we're interested in the educational side of the school, not just the management side.

Who Is That Masked Man?

We need to actually show that we are real people. When students come to see me - in Western Australia, if you go to see the principal you've normally done something good, whereas if you've done something bad, you go to one of the four deputies and they sort you out - I notice they are putting on a front, a mask. I believe many boys just take on what they see, like Arnold Schwartzenegger, they take a bit of him, a sports hero, they put a bit of that on and this mask looks pretty fierce. In Year 9 it gets the worst. That's where the hardest outer shell actually appears. The indication from the very brief bit of research that I've done, is that boys inside are actually getting more sensitive. That can be debated, but I believe that because they're getting softer inside, the outside has to get harder to conceal that vulnerable inner self. Teachers need to realise that when they've got a class of thirty Year 9's, who they see is not the real person. They are seeing the mask that the boys are actually having to wear, to be able to cope with all the taunts that are coming through on a daily basis. When they come into my office the one rule is they take the mask off. I will never ever communicate with all these other cloned personas that people have put on. Then I take my mask off, so I don't become the principal, I become a person. At that point we can actually do some real work. They can put their mask back on when they go out again. The trouble is, in a classroom you really can't ask a student to take their mask off because it's difficult in front of their peers. On a one to one basis, it works very well.

So these are some of the things that are going on in Western Australia. These ideas are not a cure-all but we want to make a difference. We really need to.

Case Studies C

School Structure / Strategy

Lyn Wendtman

Boys-only English Classes at Cherrybrook Technology High

Beverley Theobald

The Boys Action Team as Part of Whole School Improvement

Chris Bonner

Crossing Gender Boundaries

Lyn Wendtman - Biography

As the inaugural Principal at Cherrybrook Technology High School, Lyn has extensive experience in developing policies, programs and initiatives across a range of areas within a developing school.

Coming from a secondary art teaching background Lyn as an Art Consultant and a Leading Teacher before being selected as a Principal. Her study for her Masters degree concentrated on the impact of technology on school ancillary staff and she is recognised as a speaker and writer on technology in education.

Issues relating to boy's education arose at Cherrybrook in its first year when many more boys than girls elected to come to the new technology high school. Whilst that pattern has not continued, the concern for maximising opportunities and strategies for boys within the school has evolved as a clear focus for the school.

Lyn is a member of the executive of the NSW Secondary Principals Council where she manages the teaching and learning areas of Council organisation.

Lyn Wendtman - Boys-Only English Classes at Cherrybrook Technology High

The NSW Secondary Principals Council is working collaboratively on the development of a Futures Vision for publicly funded secondary education in NSW. With the belief that education is the key to Australia's future the Council is taking a proactive role in helping to shape a preferred future and in developing secondary principals the understandings and skills to lead the changes envisioned.

A critical aspect of this paper relates to the essential elements of school leadership and the belief that students are entitled to be taught and to learn from teachers and principals who model life-long learning, who value social justice, equity and excellence within learner-driven environments. Learning communities need to be able to resource opportunities for exploring ways to better meet the learning needs of all students, through school action-research projects and understanding and applying valid research.

A school culture of research involving teachers and students, which underpins school decision-making, has been a key goal at Cherrybrook. This has been the case since the school was established as an innovative lighthouse model of a purpose-built technology high school. The school charter was to explore new ways of doing things and new structures of schooling using technology. For the first few years most staff were selected on merit which helped develop a strong ethos and identity with the schools stated goals.

Even though much more uniformity has been forced on schools over the past few years there is still a strong belief amongst executive staff that policies are not caste in cement and that everything set up is on trial and can be adapted, changed and improved. As a beginning school this was essential and the belief has supported our ability to move strategically and quickly within broad technology goals to accommodate the rapid developments in educational technology.

In general school annual plans outline ways for the school community to support the well being of every student through the development of policies or programs in specific areas. All the specific programs in the world won't alter the fact that the real impact on students happens in classrooms where teachers and students work. Until we redefine the learner and the learning environment we won't significantly change things in schools. I believe that we need to look to our curriculum, our organisation, our resources and our structures and judge how they impact on all learners.

The Boys Only Class Initiative at Cherrybrook THS.

Having spent many years addressing the special needs of girls, schools recognised the necessity to develop parallel policies and special programs for boys in certain areas.

This extract from "Working with Boys" suggests that schools always develop clear policies before implementing new programs. Happy accidents aren't mentioned! At Cherrybrook the Stage 5 boys' only English classes started as a means to provide equity for girls in English and resulted in a strategy that supported boys.

In the school's first year, 1992, it was clear that our initial intake of Year 7 and 8 students had an imbalance of boys over girls. More boys elected to come to our technology high school and in core English classes staff felt that the girls were in danger of being swamped by the boys. The English Head Teacher suggested that if in Year 9, English in 1993, we put a class of boys together then the other classes would have a better gender balance.

A mixed ability randomly chosen group of boys formed the first class. Our biggest problem was to convince parents that we weren't really promoting a return to single sex schooling and that they needn't transfer their sons to Asquith BHS! It became clear as the year progressed that there appeared to be advantages for these boys and by the end of 1993 the English staff, the boys and their parents demanded that the class continue into Year 10 and another be formed in Year 9.

By 1994/5 we had moved to a more gender-balanced intake of Year 7 students and the original reason for the class disappeared. However, it was felt that we were onto something beneficial for students and that we should continue. The teachers felt that they were more able to address some specific learning needs of boys whose literacy achievement was lower than that of girls. Later when we introduced an advanced class (largely full of girls) into each of Years 9 and 10, staff said that the boys' class would once again achieve gender balance across the remaining mixed ability classes!

As a beginning school we had no ELLA, SC, HSC or even results over a number of year groups to validate our programs and so we looked for anecdotal evidence and reasons for the success of the class. Student reaction, parent surveys and continuing demand for the classes were all we had to go on. We thought that the success might just be because the initial teacher was both an excellent teacher and a good role model for boys in developing confidence and a regard for literature, communication and writing. Could other teachers duplicate his success? Was it merely the Hawthorne effect causing the perceived success?

By 1996 we were able to start doing some longitudinal research within our own school and link that to other research and initiatives we had implemented as we sought gender equity and improved learning outcomes for all.

Performance in Boys Classes: Statistical Analysis

An analysis of the 1997 Year 10 English classes revealed that the mean result at the end of Year 9 and mid Year 10 was 60% for the whole year. The average result of the boys who were placed in the Year 10 boys' class at the end of their Year 9 course was 55% but their average in Year 10 had risen to 60%. At the School Certificate the boys from the boys' class maintained this level of achievement.

Another way of showing how their achievement compared is to look at the results within each class group at the end of Semester 1, 1997.

Class	*Average Mark*	*Class type*
• *1*	*56*	*Mixed ability coeducational*
• *2*	*55*	*ditto*
• *3*	*54*	*ditto*

• *4*	*54*	*ditto*
• *5*	*56*	*ditto*
• *6*	*60*	*Boys only class*
• *7*	*85*	*Advanced class*

Tracking as many as possible showed that 22 out of the 27 in the class continued to Year 11. Sixteen selected 2 Unit General English and six chose Contemporary English. At the Year 12 half yearly point, 10 of the 16 were distributed across the top performers of the group, 5 at the average point, and one had fallen way behind his previous performance. He is currently talking with his teachers to see if he can turn things around before the HSC. In Contemporary English, two are performing towards the top of the group and of the remaining four, none is in the lower 25% band.

The 1997/98, Year 9 and 10 boy's classes also showed slightly higher than average performance levels than those achieved in the other mixed ability classes. The majority also improved markedly on their Year 8 results with only three students performing more poorly at the end of Year 9 and one of those had an extensive absence due to illness. In the current Year 11 streamed General English classes, the top class includes 10 out of 11 boys from the boys-only classes of 97 or 98.

Teaching Boys

Teachers with a particular interest in boys' education volunteer to take the boys classes. The classes are formed as mixed ability classes on the basis of test and assessment results and so, in theory, are equal in ability as all other mixed ability classes. Students with their parents can elect to be included in the class, some students are recommended by teachers or the school counsellor, other students are included for their ability to work cooperatively with others in learning situations. They are not formed with 'troublesome' students or particularly low achievers although some students will not have experienced success in English. We have also observed that some quiet boys and ESL students do not enjoy the kinds of activities, which are the focus of the class.

Learning activities and programs are consistent with other mixed ability classes although there is more emphasis placed on the kinds of learning styles that boys tend to favour: physical, active group and individual tasks; structured writing; texts chosen that will initially have a boys' focus; fairly free use of language. As the students develop confidence in their own abilities and the teacher, the selection of texts and discussion topics broadens out to less stereotypical 'boys' area. Some views of masculinity can be challenged as the class develops cohesion. Some work has also been done on identifying learning styles and giving the boys direct instruction in different approaches to problem solving such as the six hats of de Bono. This explicit discussion and identification of individual learning styles gives boys an added dimension to their understandings of how they learn.

In addition, the importance of success in language is put into a whole school and social context. Students learn how their work in English has implications across KLA's, with such text types as the report being shown to be relevant in subjects other than English. Their speaking and listening activities will have relevance across KLA's and boys respond positively to the knowledge that language competence is vital for success beyond the English classroom. The boys have had guest speakers such as the popular writer John Marsden, presenting himself as a successful role model, a man who has gained economic as well as personal benefit from language.

In Stage 5, we have run a Writers and Writing semester course for a number of years. At first only girls elected to do the course. By 1999 the proportion of boys choosing this elective reached 46% of the class. There isn't just one strategy for success and we must keep searching and persevering to find better ways to reach and impact on student learning.

Key Factors

- Operating the boys' only English classes has taught us that: purely random selection means that STLD, behaviourally disturbed or ESL students can be inappropriately placed in the class. Whilst their performance probably does not improve or deteriorate the group struggles to develop an identity which is very important in this initiative.

- Selecting a few top students to act as role models in the class is a good idea. In 1999 this model is working well and worked against the idea others might have had in the class that "it's not cool for boys to like English". You need four or five boys to form a critical mass within the class to support one another.

- Some boys do not improve their performance in this class. More academically inclined quiet boys appear not to do as well, as the classroom strategies suited to a boys-only environment may not work for them.

- Selecting a certain percentage of ESL students proved problematic. They often need extensive ESL support and withdrawal from class activities, which disturbed the class dynamics. We also found that for many their preferred learning style was not easily accommodated in the boy's class.

- Allowing students to elect to stay in the class over two years is a good idea if possible. 85% of the Year 9 class in 1997 when surveyed said that they would like to remain for Year 10 and teachers who have worked with the classes prefer continuity as much as possible over the two years. Unfortunately our timetable organisation worked against this.

- Parents nominating their son for inclusion can be a positive move. Each year we have a small response to our notices but those that have made the request and had their son included have been happy with the result.

- Communication with parents is an essential element. From the time of selection we try to involve parents. An initial survey asks them to identify characteristics such as preferred learning style, neatness or otherwise with writing, vocabulary confidence, can he follow instructions etc.

Other Key Factors, Which Help and Support Such Initiatives

It's important to reflect that the Boys only classes don't operate in isolation within the school and that there are other strategies at CTHS helping to establish a climate where such initiatives stand a chance of success. Valuing individual differences and providing structured and regular avenues for achievement and the recognition of that achievement is essential.

The school is arranged into three Stages with a Head Teacher Stage responsible for the overall management, curriculum development and cohesion as well as the welfare of students for each. Stage 5 (Years 9 and

10) is an important developmental and socialising time for boys. This Stage has a vertical semester system for the electives, Human Society and Science and is where the Boys only English classes operate.

I believe a vital plank in our strategy is that all Stage 4 students study Drama in Years 7 and 8 with specific development in communication in Year 8. When Bob Mansfield (the then Optus CEO) spoke at the 1995 International Confederation of Principals Convention in Sydney, he said that Drama was one of the most valuable school subjects for all students to study. He believed the communication; teamwork and the confidence gained were invaluable as lifetime skills for everyone. He had found that employees with a drama background were assets to his companies and I have never forgotten his speech and have regularly spoken of his views to student groups on assembly and to parents at meetings.

This emphasis on Drama being taught by specialist Drama Teachers has resulted in success and a strong tradition of boys taking on the Drama electives in Stage 5 with many continuing to the HSC. The high standard has led to four of our boys being selected into the State Drama Company in the past 2 years. This is an unusual result from a co-educational comprehensive secondary school. At school assemblies and events, performance has always been a key element and there is an expectation that all other students will respect and respond appropriately to the performance. Drama activities at school, district and at state level have provided opportunities for boys to excel and demonstrate their creativity and this success is regularly publicised.

It is also important to reward and celebrate student achievement from all spheres and I try to spread the mentions as in this recent newsletter article:

Congratulations to a number of students for recent individual efforts. Ben Moss (Year 10) has been selected as a member of the 1999 NSW Public Schools State Drama Company and will be touring England as part of the "Reaching the World" Olympic Arts Festival in December this year. Hugh Perrett recently represented NSW Combined High Schools in an 18-day rugby tour in Vancouver, Canada where the team won almost all their games.

I have developed a keen eye when photos are placed in school newsletters, or taken for newspaper articles, or representing the school to ensure that equal numbers of boys and girls appear and that boys aren't only appearing with computers and footballs. Sometimes I make a regular nuisance of myself in reminding others that we must reward all types of achievement. On Saturday a number of our students are appearing on Channel 9 and I know we ensured a good balance for the interviews but whether the producer uses them all we will wait to see!

Staff tolerance for noise has sometimes been tested as student rock bands (usually boy's bands) are given exposure at school assemblies. An annual MADD (Music, Art, Drama and Dance) concert provides an opportunity for students (boys and girls) to demonstrate the quality of their curriculum achievements in those areas.

As a Technology High School we have needed to provide inclusive programs for girls in technology where often boys seem to have an advantage. Our greatest success in this has been in the areas of computer graphics and art where girls are finding a niche for success. Through film and computer animation we have been able to celebrate individual and group student diversity and achievement.

What we have Learnt from School Based Research

For the past eight years we have tried to underpin school decision-making and programs with school based research involving teachers and students. We have been involved in many within-school or partnership research projects with universities, and individuals on diverse areas. Some of these are: the use of technology in the learning process; students attitudes to computers; students self esteem in a new secondary school environment; ancillary staff use of technology; curriculum mapping; and even multimedia as a teaching tool. We have used survey tools such as questionnaires, meeting responses, filming classes, interviews and teacher feedback.

A 1994 school study by Gwen Gawith, a lecturer at Auckland College of Education and the then New Zealand National Co-ordinator of Information Studies found the following in relation to the ways our students were using computers:

> In almost all encounters observed, the students were using the technology intelligently and thoughtfully... they were predicting, hypothesing, testing, confirming and reflecting on the actual process of using the technology.

However, the study showed that the outcomes were not so impressive:

> Student's skills in using the information showed less of this reflection and metacognition. It seemed that learning to use the technology did produce qualitatively different learning processes but that this was not automatically mirrored in the use of the information, boys, on the whole used deeper strategies and more analysis and reflection when it came to using the technology. Girls were more critical and analytical when it came to using the information.

On commenting on this result with the school executive staff the reactions were interesting. The women nodded wisely whilst the men said "So - what is the problem?

The school has a well-deserved reputation for excellence in computer graphics within Visual Arts. Originally we found that boys who produced some wonderful animated sequences predominantly accessed the medium. More recently girls have discovered this as a good vehicle for their creative expression and in Art Express last year two of the three graphic works chosen from this school were done by girls.

One of our teachers, whilst doing her postgraduate studies, researched in a hypothetical school 'The effect of gender on perceptions of achievement and ability in early adolescence'. This study questioned how Year 7 boys and girls viewed intelligence and ability especially relating to Mathematics, English, Science and HSIE and how it related to preferred learning styles and cognition.

The research showed some interesting results with relevance for our own and other schools.

- Both boys and girls at that age overwhelmingly thought it was not "cool" to be smart and most believed that smart people were not popular.
- They generally believed that effort could improve English and HSIE but not Mathematics and Social Studies but the girls were more inclined to believe this than boys.
- Learning style preference did not significantly differ for either boys or girls.
- Mastery learning was not strong in those students who lacked the idea that learning could be incremental.

- Boys and girls perception of their abilities in either English or Mathematics was not borne out by the results. In Maths the boys perceived that they achieved higher than the girls but the girls performance on the questionnaire test was contrary.
- Boys and girls were influenced by social factors of the school environment and the wider community when it came to questioning why they did or didn't do well in a subject.

Some messages emerge from the study of value to us all:

- There is a need at the Year 7 level to reinforce the value of effort and the importance of developing skills.
- Metacognitive skills need to be developed in those students who do not believe that learning is incremental.
- Schools need to consider how subjects are discussed, presented, rewarded and recognised in the broader school community. What is valued? What messages do we send – particularly in areas where the student's perception of their ability is weak?
- Confidence and interest are interconnected

Such well-validated research provides valuable insights for principals and their staff when considering changing or improving school practices.

So where does the Leadership come into all this?

Current thinking recognises that principals make a difference in shaping the education that goes on in a school. Amongst other ways they do this by recognising that our core business is teaching and learning, by regularly communicating school goals to the school community and by being a facilitator for others.

There are many ways for school leaders to support gender equity. These include: promoting the widest range of student activity at every opportunity such as at assemblies, in articles, through photos. Schools could be collecting and using research data for staff development and whole school planning. Principals could encourage the collection of qualitative and quantitative information from school programs; support staff personal professional development; encourage and facilitate innovative ideas and promote them to parents; and monitor community and parental support for, and involvement with, gender equity strategies.

Beverley Theobald - Biography

Beverley has been Principal of Kurri Kurri High School for just over four years. During that time the school has become a leader in the areas of middle schooling and school improvement. Previously, Beverley has worked in six other schools in country NSW including Macintyre High School in Inverell, Bathurst High School, Bomaderry High School in Nowra, Deniliquin High School, Wellington High School and Dubbo High School. She has been active in the field of training and development, running conferences and workshops in a variety of educational contexts at local, state and interstate levels. Most recently, she presented a paper at a Boys' Education Conference in Sydney and in March, this year she presented workshops at the National Middle years of Schooling Conference in Melbourne. She was a program manager for a state pilot program for mentoring women in executive positions in country regions. Currently, she is the secondary principal representative on the Taree/Maitland Interdistrict School Leadership Group that is conducting a state pilot program for leadership preparation. In her spare time she like to travel, play piano, do tapestries, collect wine, attend the theatre and read.

Beverley Theobald - The Boys Action Team as Part of Whole School Improvement

I have been at Kurri Kurri High School for four years and when I came to the school four years ago it seemed to me that we had a fairly traditional school structure and curriculum that didn't really fit with the sort of community that I was working in. So we attempted as a staff with some parent involvement, to try and establish what we were on about as a school. We ended up developing a framework that fits under our teaching and learning umbrella. Under this umbrella, we have the areas of curriculum, the learning community and the student learning environment. In each area there are several aspects we decided we needed to focus on.

At the same time, we also developed student exit outcomes that showed what we thought our students should be like when they left Kurri Kurri High School. The task for us was setting up the strategies and structures in the school that would lead us to meet those student exit outcomes under the umbrella of teaching and learning.

To achieve this we set up a School Improvement Team. The team consisted of teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and students. We trained the team in action research and quality management principles. All of the team actually embarked on different research areas in the school. One of these eventually led us to middle schooling and we set up a middle school at the beginning of 1997.

Once we trained the team in these processes, whenever we take on an issue of investigation in the school, we set it up as a sub team of the School Improvement Team and they use the same sort of action research and data collection strategies. One of the teams that we set up at Kurri Kurri High School, at the beginning of last year, was a Boys Action Team - the BAT Team.

Boys Action Team

The BAT embarked on a period of research leading to recommendations for change within the school. We thought that if we were going to be looking at strategies for boy's education then there were a number of fields that we need to consider. The school culture and organisation is a really important one in looking at a whole school change to attitudes regarding boys. So it's not just behaviour management. It's not just the social skills, but it's also the student learning and the way we organise our school, the way we talk to each other and relate to each other. All those sorts of things are just as important in boy's education.

Data Collection

We started collecting data about the boys in our school. It's very important that you use data to drive your planning. We collected data on English, Language and Literacy Assessment that is done in Year 7 across the state. We were actually a pilot school so we started in the first year of ELLA. One year's results shows that the girl's scores for writing and language were above the state mean, the boys are behind in all areas. We also found that in our junior classes in Mathematics and English in Year 9 and 10 that there was significantly more girls in some classes than boys.

We looked at notifications to the Deputy Principal. We have parents on our boys action team and we allowed them access to the 'untouchable' deputy's diary and deputy's records. They were able to build up the statistics that show that, with the exception of one or two areas where the girls actually are higher, the boys are figuring highly in the notifications to the deputy.

We ran a survey with our parents, our Year 11 boys and our staff. We're acknowledging that we've got a problem with the boys in our community and in our school community.

Talking to Parents

By the time that the Boy's Action Team had done all this work and they realised that they needed to do something about it in the school. We decided that we really needed to talk to the parents about it. So we held a parent information night, we showed them our statistics.

Developing Strategies

We decided then that we needed to work on developing some strategies for our boys. We focused eventually on four key areas. They were interpersonal relations, anti bullying, motivation and literacy and numeracy. The BAT team developed action plans in each of those four areas. The school provided them with some time to do that. They went through a consultation process with the staff and the parents and a redrafting process.

Pilot Implementation

The next stage was the pilot implementation stage in some of those areas. In the area of interpersonal relations, the boys action team coordinator, Brian Hayes worked with an itinerant teacher - behaviour, with a small group of very troublesome Year 8 boys, who had all sorts of social problems and lots of problems in the school. The two teachers worked in a team teaching arrangement and they taught the boys to juggle. In teaching the boys to juggle and make the juggling balls, they were attempting to build the boys self-esteem. This was a six week program and it had stages, leading to the boys beginning to change their behaviour, including playground behaviour as well as classroom behaviour.

Whole School Implementation

The two teachers involved have developed units of work that can be used across the school. They started with a pilot, and now they've established a program that other teachers can pick up and use at different times. We found starting a small pilot that then becomes part of a whole school strategy to be quite a useful process in developing boyswork.

In the area of anti bullying, we're on a draft stage of our anti bullying policy. We've tried to dove-tail this into our current welfare and discipline policy. We didn't want to add on another policy. We wanted it to dove-tail into existing policies. We're currently at the consultation stage with staff, school council, parents and students. In our twenty- five hour PD/ health course, one of our staff members has been working with the boys on aspects of what it's like to be male.

One of the things that is really important in any strategy for boys in the school, is that it must be interconnected with everything else that's going on in the school that is relevant. For example, the middle school is very important in our support structure for boys.

Pedagogy is another important area. We've had considerable discussions about learning styles and we are at the moment developing a Kurri Kurri High School Model of Learning. We're researching a whole lot of modalities of learning like the Coil Modalities, McCarthy, Camboin, multiple intelligences and so on. We're going to develop that into a Kurri Kurri model that will fit our students and the boys component will be a very important component of that.

At Kurri Kurri High, we don't believe in bullying in our school and that includes teachers as well, because some teachers are bullies. We have for a number of years now worked on using CTRT and things like peer mediation. We also have a student adviser - boys. Schools are allowed to have a student adviser - girls under the traditional structure but we have a boys' one as well.

The Drama electives in our school are very highly supported by boys now but we had to really build on getting boys involved in that and they love it, absolutely love it. We did that through using a very good male role model drama teacher

The Cessnock District Learning Centre is a sort of time-out school that was set up across our school, Mountview High School, and Cessnock High School. The three of us contribute through our staffing to that school. We have an excellent teacher who works mainly with boys who are problems in the schools and they go out for a period of time to the Learning Centre, with the idea of integrating them back into our schools. So it's not a way of getting rid of the problems, it's a way of helping them cope with schooling and bringing them back into our schools.

Relating Boyswork to all Aspects of the School

The relational aspect of boys' education is really important. We're really talking about a gender issue here. One of the fathers, who's involved in our Boy's Action Team and our school improvement team, said to the parents at the parent information night, 'You might wonder why I am here on a boy's action team when I'm a father of two girls at this high school'. But he said ' I believe that we need to do something about boys, boys' education and boys' attitudes in this community of Kurri Kurri because whatever we do for boys will have an impact on my girl's future'.

And that's a really important thing to remember. So we should think of boy's education in relational terms with girls in our school.

Finally, to link it in with the leadership aspect, the sort of strategies that you develop in boys' education in your school must be aligned with everything else that you're doing in the school as well. It's extremely important to link it in with the school's structures that you are using, to link it in with the school culture that you're propounding. We've chosen the teaching and learning umbrella in our school with the curriculum, the learning environment and the learning community under that. You need to ensure that your boys' education is not just an extra but is actually linked in with everything that you're doing in the school.

Chris Bonner - Biography

Chris has served in eight schools in New South Wales, most recently as Principal of Asquith Boys High School in northern Sydney. He has studied, travelled and visited schools overseas, and presented a paper at the International Confederation of Principals Third World Convention at Boston. He has participated in two study tours of New Zealand, investigating issues in school management and governance. He has worked as a consultant and written half a dozen (mainly geography) books. His interests have ranged over such things as curriculum, school retention, governance and management and most recently gender issues. His school has, along with others, pioneered a number of initiatives in promoting balanced development of boys. He is currently Deputy President of the NSW Secondary Principals' Council.

Chris Bonner - Crossing Gender Boundaries

Concerns about boys' education touch everything else we do in schools. Clearly in my school there's a lot of features and initiatives that are not unique and would work in many schools. However, in an area such as gender programs I believe that transplanting programs from one school to another without preparing the ground can be a recipe for disaster. So I ask you to bear with me because I'm on about preparing the ground as I am about transplanting.

Over the years I've been to many conferences on boys and masculinity in schools and I've listened to many speakers. I've come to believe that the only area of agreement amongst us is that there is a problem and there are a range of symptoms of the problem that we can identify. If you dig a little deeper however, you will find that there are many views about the nature of the problem and the appropriate solutions. Let's think about some of these.

What is the Problem?

Some people believe that boys' problems are all about affirmative action, that somehow the boys have missed out on some sort of gravy train and if only they can get on the gravy train all will be well again. Other people believe that huge social changes have divorced boys away from their masculine tribal roots (whatever they are) and all we need to do is to get these boys back to these tribal roots and some sort of equilibrium will be restored.

The solutions are very diverse. I was speaking to a South African once at a conference and he said that all 'the boys need is more rugby. Others claim that despite our best efforts boys will still be boys and they resign themselves to this sort of 'biological defeatism'.

So there are too many hidden agendas in this whole scene about boys. You need to know where I'm coming from. What I say is not all that original in a sense. I've been certainly influenced by the Rollo Brownes and the Bob Connells and Gilberts and other people writing on gender. I think we fundamentally need to understand how we bring up boys and how they acquire their understanding about gender, their masculinity. Until we do this we just condemn ourselves to being ongoing witnesses to repetitions of the problem. It's a bit of a disease of our profession: we just repeat the problem without coming up with creative solutions all that often. And we do waste enormous resources and energy by ignoring the gender issue.

And it is a gender issue. Let me give you an example: how can programs on literacy for boys be remotely useful unless we focus on the issues of masculinity? Unless we're trying to break down that massive brick wall that many build to place between them and learning. It is a brick wall of restrictive masculinity. We need to do something about that.

Crossing Gender Boundaries

Gender equity for boys is exactly the same as it is for girls: it is a matter of letting young people develop in an atmosphere free of restrictive and potentially damaging stereotypes. I believe that gender equity programs for boys are more critical in the sense that the stereotypes that become the building blocks of their gender understandings can be very, very destructive of themselves and others and communities. We see the results of girls acquiring inappropriate gender messages. We see anorexia, we see depression. However, there is an urgency with boys: if girls get this gender thing wrong they place themselves at risk; if boys get this gender thing wrong we're all at risk.

The success in girl's education strategies certainly owes much to an overt focus on girls, We know that there needs to be an equally overt focus on boys but we need to do it for the right reasons. There's a great focus on the relative academic performance of boys but this diverts our attention to a simple and often misleading 'catch up' syndrome for boys.

We need to understand why girls have been successful and we also have to understand that there are still considerable limits to their success, especially in the after school years. My own view is that the success of girls can be partly linked to the crossing of the gender boundaries that were a barrier in the past. As a consequence, what we should do on behalf of boys is not cry foul and shift the goal posts. There's a hell of a lot of goal post shifting in writing and thinking about boys. We should be on about encouraging boys to also cross the gender boundary.

So I guess you understand now where I'm coming from: I see gender as a social construction. Gender is something I believe that we acquire as we stumble our way through our lives. The defeatist biological determinism that 'boys will be boys' is rubbish: boys develop their masculinity and we and others are big players in that process all the time. The good news as far as I see is that their understandings about gender are not something that's fixed in concrete. We can shift their understandings about gender because our own understandings about gender are substantially shifted. That gives us a huge capacity to help young people, to help boys especially.

When I'm concerned about masculinity I'm overwhelmingly concerned about dominant or 'hegemonic' masculinity. I firmly believe that hegemonic masculinity just doesn't work for boys in the late 1990's. And its destructiveness knows no boundaries. You hear about the poor unskilled hegemonic males who destroy families, social order and community life. The rich educated ones become economic rationalists, don't they? And they destroy families, social order and community life.

For all males the world is changed. We live with enormous economic and structural changes that effect our boys, that effect work organisation and work structure and skills. A generation ago when I left school, the vast number of low skilled and under-performing boys could gain life time or near life time employment. We know those jobs are no longer around. So our boys (and girls) are then staying on at schools which they see as alien environments. When those boys leave school they have to confront new realities. There's a new world out there: their traditional male skills and qualities aren't in very high demand. To survive, these boys and girls need skills in literacy, they need communication skills. They need cooperative learning and working and to acquire these skills they must learn to cross the gender boundary just as the girls have successfully done. That is where I'm coming from: it is the boys that need to change.

Masculinising School?

Some people say that the answer to alienated young men lies in masculinising school culture to make it somehow less alien. This presumably means identifying male modes of learning and emphasising competition, activity based learning and everything else which is in the territory of left brain learners. We have to do some of that and I really like the context in which Cherrybrook High School is doing this because it is a whole school context. They decided to do some of this because it's important and it's apparently yielding results. But catering for boys' learning styles alone, even in the single sex setting, has the potential to reinforce destructive stereotypes and disenfranchise those significant number of boys in our schools who aren't 'male' learners. And there's no reason why they have to be male learners.

This really gives rise to a bigger issue doesn't it? If a restructured workforce demands high literacy, communication and cooperation, the boys have to change to suit the new mould. We'll be doing boys a greater disservice if we ignore these demands and instead spend all our time recreating schools to cater for boys' unreconstructed masculinity. If my school was changed to cater for boys' unreconstructed masculinity I would be the first one out the door because it wouldn't be a pretty place.

We need to understand that we, in our schools, are enormous contributors to gender construction. Bob Connell and others talk about gender formation in schools. With our institutional arrangements, power relationships, rules, cultural frameworks and peer groups, we are always conveying messages about masculinity. And we do it in our curriculum, in our structures of curriculum. We do it in assessment, we do it in discipline, we do it in sport, we do it in a daily organisation, we do it all the time, conveying messages about gender. So we're already in the gender business, we've just to get it right.

Three Priorities

Basically I think schools should do three things (I think we're doing this in my school in varying degrees of success, some more than others):

1. They should be about encouraging and allowing boys to diversify the ways in which they develop, view and express their masculinity. This relates to what they do at schools, the subjects they study, the opportunities they have, the games they play, goodness knows what else.

2. Then (and this is one area where my school is lagging behind although we're trying) boys need to learn at school about masculinity and issues such as power, sexism, discrimination,

homophobia and just about everything else that contributes negatively to their construction as a male.

3. Then at the very same time schools need to create a culture or environment in which it is safe for boys to be different.

I think you need all those three things, I don't think you can do it without any one of those. I tried to do it for a number of years with just the contextual stuff, but it didn't work. We have to get into educating about masculinity.

The good news of course is that we can be very, very successful. As teachers we always have to remind ourselves of our successes. We are very successful in social welfare programs. Look at the anti-racism programs in your schools and you look at the enormous strides we've made in schools in the area of battling racism. Enormous successes, huge runs on the board. We are and can be extremely successful. We can be just as successful with gender programs, we can shift the ground.

We also know that you can't transplant social welfare programs from one school to another. The success, I believe, of gender programs in schools is built up from a collective understanding of everybody in the school on the issues involved. You can't do that overnight. For gender programs to be successful a school just needs to develop this collective commitment in order to experience the required cultural shift. There aren't any short cuts.

Look In the Mirror

Now let's get back to us as school leaders. Our attitudes towards gender issues and our roles, our understanding of masculinity and femininity is something that we also develop over time. Just like the kids it is socially constructed for us and we can't avoid being influenced by the experiences of our years in which we barged, stumbled, crawled, cajoled our way through adolescence.

But we're not always prisoners of these years of our lives. We certainly develop and negotiate and renegotiate our understandings about gender. This happens to us all the time. You know very well (those of you that are nudging either side of fifty) that the male-female work relations in the workplace in schools do not resemble what they were twenty five years ago. Neither they should. Nobody can convince me that our gender understandings are embedded in concrete, they're not. Our understandings will continually be challenged and endorsed and contradicted and resisted through our lives.

But we're not ordinary people going through life acquiring our understandings about gender. You and I are really powerful people in our own patch. We're enormously powerful, heads of organisation of hundreds and sometimes thousands of young people; movers and shakers. We're a significant example to impressionable others. We have an enormous 'whack' by what we do and say. And incidentally, we have an enormous whack by what we choose not to do and not to say.

Much of what we do and much of what we say has this gender framework. I always say to principals if you want to go around your school and search for the origin or gender messages in your school start with the bathroom and look in the mirror. That's where it's coming from. So we transmit our gender understandings. You just think about it: as leaders we have limited time and we have to make choices. Last Monday there was a debate going on in the library and outside there was a final of a soccer competition. Where do I go? What message do I give? I could tell you what I did but the point is that the decision that I made, the decisions that I make are sending and transmitting messages to boys about what I value .

What has surprised me, although it shouldn't, is that over a long period of time it has become progressively more acceptable in my school for boys to be in debates, vocal groups, drama, dance, art and so on. I take credit for this just as I take the blame for the things that sometimes fall off. In working with gender messages my approach at conferences is to hit people with a series of values-related gender statements and ask people to reflect on whether they agree or disagree with these statements. It's always a lot of fun and I've managed to do it in a few places and still get away without being lynched. I mean that because I ask people to declare themselves. I won't do it here because there's too many, the odds would be against me. Such things as:

It's better for a girl to be boyish then it is for a boy to be a sissy or a wimp.

Virginity is more important for girls or women then for men or boys.

It's worse for a girl to swear then it is for a boy. Etc, etc, etc.

In one big conference I asked people to declare themselves one way or the other on these sorts of questions. What was interesting is that you get this enormous diversity in responses. Equally important: if you were to think about your stance on those issues in 1999 compared with your stance on those issues in 1970 you get a fairly thorough understanding that beliefs about gender are very dynamic.

Let us not pretend that we have a neutral impact on the gender understandings about young people. We don't. Where you or I are coming from on gender is profoundly going to influence where our young people are going to.

Students' Perceptions

Let me talk about the issue of school leadership and our influence on kids a bit more. I put it to the test recently in my own school. I asked a sample of thirty Year 12 boys to rank a number of school activities from a set list in their preferred order. Their list was quite interesting.

They prized such things as excursions, prefects, school newsletter (that was good), activities with the adjoining girls schools (surprise, surprise!). Grade sport was also ranked highly but other sporting events received a middle ranking, they weren't wildly over-excited. Activities such as musicals, peer support, formal assemblies as Art and Drama all received a reasonable mark but were certainly lower in rank. I'm not going to pretend otherwise.

Then I asked them to rank these things according to what they thought were my preferences. They could clearly and quite accurately identify my priorities: peer support, SRC, musicals, Visual Art and Drama ranked highly. They also saw me as valuing formal assemblies. They thought I'd place a lesser value on excursions, non-uniform days and discos. What this told me was that visibility and profile of school leaders is very, very important. I do value the things that they saw me as valuing. They obviously have an impression of me as strongly supporting these things. I don't get excited about formal assemblies but that's all symbolic leadership stuff in a school and, yes I'm up there and they notice. They must think: he gets a kick out of this somehow. I don't mind excursions but they haven't seen me on many excursions. Isn't that interesting? So they rated that quite low. I always complain on assemblies about how I hate discos where I wear industrial ear muffs in the hall. So they sort of pick up the way I feel about discos. Perceptive little devils.

Then I gave them a list of nasty things that we often find in our schools and I asked them to identify the ones that they would most like to get rid of. Their list was quite mature probably reflecting that they're Year 12. They would most want to get rid of bullying, racism, homophobia, sexism, smoking and littering (that kills all the nice things I've said about my school, doesn't it!). I know they're Year 12 kids but it was pretty impressive stuff. To a lesser extent they didn't like graffiti, disrespect of teachers and also unfair treatment of students by teachers. They didn't like excessive homework, misbehaviour and playground fights or disputes. They weren't as concerned about the wearing of school uniform incorrectly, they weren't as concerned about swearing, strange haircuts or rough play. I don't know whether these things are endemic or not.

They were then asked to rank the nasties according to my interests and preferences. Again they could clearly and reasonably accurately identify my priorities and these tended to match their own: they did think I was more concerned about correct wearing of school uniform, playground fights or disputes, misbehaviour and swearing. I guess they're the sort of things that kids always see principals as being concerned about. They saw me as being less concerned about unfair treatment of students and excessive homework.

But what shocked me initially was that they saw me as being far less concerned than they were about homophobia. Don't these ungrateful wretches know that concern about problems such as homophobia underpins much of what I do in the school? The answer is that they don't know. They do see me asking them to tuck their shirts in. How often do they see me or hear me directly speaking out against homophobia? It comes back to visibility, profile of us as school leaders. We can believe in an agenda as much as we like but unless we say it, live it and act it in our everyday lives in our schools they won't pick up the message. Neville Johnson in his work on learning in schools, constantly reinforces this message that as leading learners in our schools, we must live and breath and speak learning. That's part of the way in which our whole school community picks up priorities in learning.

Changes at Asquith

Let me whiz through a few things about the school. I think a lot of the things I've done in my school have been overwhelmingly contextual in nature. A boys' high school cries out for contextual change and I'm a strong believer that organisational change profoundly influences behavioural change. It certainly has in this boys' school.

Teaching and Learning

I think it's unsafe for me in a single sex school to focus on boys' traditional learning styles. Our work on learning styles has always emphasised diversity. We do not make generalisations about boys all being left brain learners who need the structured competition of ranking. We cannot afford to disenfranchise our boys who don't fit the stereotypes.

Period Length

Oddly enough, the change to one hour lessons delivered advantages in teaching and learning and also reduced movement around the school. There's this ancient law that says any two boys walking past each other in any one given corridor will exchange 2.54 biffs and blows! If you go from eight periods to five periods you just reduce the number of times they walk past each other.

Bullying

When I walked into that school (and this is urban myth building stuff) I became known as the principal that went in and tossed out the bullies. I did make a big 'hoo-ha' about it and so kids know I will drop everything if there's an issue of intimidation and so on. New principals have powerful opportunities to establish urban myths.

Curriculum

The structure of curriculum I think is very, very critical. You can't get kids to cross the gender divide if your curriculum structures are tight and inflexible. They just won't do it. You can't get boys to do try Drama if they're going to be locked in for two or three years. Visual Arts is very powerful in our school actually. Drama is good. We have a huge musical every year and with more than enough boys auditioning for places.

School Organisation

If you put any two boys together (after biffing each other) they'll establish an institution or hierarchy or whatever. I'm all about damaging and destroying their hierarchies and eliminating all their non- functional rules that riddle boys' schools and all non-functional hierarchies. There was a biff on the stairs once in E block. I'd been there for a couple of years and it turned out that the fight came about because these junior kids were on the senior stairs. I said, "What the bloody hell are senior stairs?" It transpires that senior stairs are places to allow senior students to lord it over junior students. I had to be in the place for years before I began to understand some of these institutional arrangements.

Competition and Achievement

I've had a couple of fairly mediocre High School Certificate years go through with a good year coming up. Sometimes I wonder if I reverted to the stereotypes and pushed the competition among boys in all aspects of their school life, whether it would improve their results. It might but for me, it's just not a price I'm prepared to pay (despite a suggestion to that effect by a senior bureaucrat). I never claim to have solved any of these academic performance 'issues' which are big issues for boys, at least in the short term. To be quite honest: my gut feeling is that if we get all these other things right for boys and they do better than girls, so be it. If we get all these other things right for boys and they don't do better than girls, so be it also. Achievement is, to a great extent, a red herring.

To Conclude

There have been fundamental changes in gender roles and relationships in the last few decades. These challenge and constantly re-challenge our assumptions and understandings that we hold about masculinity and femininity. Such changes require us as leaders to understand ourselves, to make adjustments in our own lives sometimes, and to be active agents in facilitating the adjustment of our young people.

I just think the negative qualities of many of our boys display should not be accepted as an inevitable part of the package of masculinity. We owe it to our boys and to ourselves to help these kids discover better alternatives for themselves and as a consequence create better schools and better communities. And I would argue the allocation of time in these areas as a substantial investment in our effectiveness as teachers and also in the effectiveness of our schools. Just as we are proud of how we equip our young people with the skills to adapt and survive in a changing work and social environment, so we also need to equip them to survive and thrive in the critical area of their own gender development.

Thank you for your time.

Case Studies D
Discipline/Welfare/Bullying

John Craig, Tina Barnier, Ian Beasley

Changing the Football Culture

Bill Campbell

Raising the Self-Esteem of Boys' Through Skill Development

John Craig, Tina Barnier, Ian Beasley - Biographies

John Craig is currently the Principal of Blacktown Boys' High School in NSW. He has taught in selective, comprehensive and single sex boys' and girls' schools for the NSW Department of Education and Training. In addition, John has worked in the NSWDET Quality Assurance Unit and in the private sector in training and development. His special interest in boys' education comes from his work as Deputy Principal at Canterbury Boys High and as head Teacher, Mathematics at Sydney Technical High School, where the issues of boys' achievement and narrow definitions of masculinity became obvious to him.

Tina Barnier has been a leading teacher at Blacktown Boys' High School for the past four years. Before that she worked in Mt Druitt High Schools for many years. Her focus during these years was on girls' education but it dawned on her that if she really wanted to make a difference in women's lives then she should also work with the boys. She has a vested interest in making the lives of both boys and girls go well as she is the mother of two sons and a daughter.

Ian Beasley is the Deputy Principal of Blacktown Boys' High School. He has occupied the position of Head Teacher, Mathematics at Arthur Philip High School and Drummoyne Boys High. He is also Principal of Chatswood Saturday School of Community Languages. As director of programs at Arthur Philip High, he researched disengagement and attendance problems amongst boys.

John Craig, Tina Barnier, Ian Beasley - Changing the Football Culture

I'm John Craig. I am the Principal of Blacktown Boys' High School. Tina Barnier, our Leading Teacher and Ian Beasley, the Deputy Principal, will share this presentation with me. I will talk about the key factors and processes in the changes we implemented at Blacktown Boys' High. Tina will discuss the question of masculinity and its impact on school culture; while Ian will relate the changes we have made to sustain the outcomes that we want for our boys.

Many of the things that the National Rugby League has experienced in the last six to eight weeks are the same sort of things that were in operation in Blacktown Boys' in 1995. It was a highly macho culture. It had a single icon, namely, a Rugby League team. There was a high incidence of violence amongst the students. The Head Teacher (Administration) had a full time load handling violent incidences which seemed to occur at recess, lunch, before school, after school, on the way to school and on the way home. These were not little fights. They had high involvement. We could have eight or ten students involved in the fight, and probably 25-30 onlookers who actively urged on any situation.

The Quality Assurance Review for the school, in Term 2, 1995 was a highly significant thing for the school. It consulted all the school community, the staff, students, parents and three fundamental change recommendations came out of it. For those people who don't know the term fundamental change, it means essentially to start again. The three fundamental changes were in teaching, learning and curriculum; student welfare, and school culture and organisation. So in short it was about changing the whole way the place operated. Now as we talk about these three areas, I would like you to think about a jelly. A jelly, if you touch it, makes adjustments. It wobbles everywhere, it bubbles out somewhere and that's the best description of the changes that we made.

To get fundamental change it has to be made on multiple fronts. Change is not linear. The most important change was the culture change. The most significant thing we did was to work together to produce a values and belief statement, which essentially described the exit behaviours that we wanted for our students at the end of six years. That took approximately 18 months. Key issues for cultural change were the communication methods, welfare structures and processes and curriculum structures to be put in place.

We looked for change in relationships between staff and students because we had a welfare system based on power and coercion and very high verbal violence. Students were judged on how hard you scream at some one, how hard you could shout, and whether you could get someone to cry. We also had to look for the relationships between the parts of the school: the curriculum and how that related to welfare, and to the structures within the school and how they related; professional development for staff and students and how that related to decision making.

It was a fairly difficult 18 months to get a values and belief statement that made sense to everyone and that locked people into a shared idea of what we were trying to achieve for the boys. We wanted to move away from a very limited version of masculinity, the macho culture that was in place in the school, that is, essentially a rugby league culture as we read about in the paper. It wasn't unusual for the rugby league players to get preferential treatment on a range of issues such as the uniforms they wore and sanctions for behaviour and misbehaviour. In other words we had to rebuild the machine and at the same time keep it running.

The significant changes in the school were all data driven. We used student and staff questionnaires. Every year, we use the same questionnaire at the same time of the year to assess whether we have made progress. In 1994 we had incomplete data because no one really knew what was happening, except there was a fair amount of discomfort in the school for all concerned. There had been something like a hundred and two suspensions in the year. Absenteeism during Term 4 jumped to about 20 per cent. Because of the Head Teacher (Administration) being preoccupied with violence, little could be done about this. Other problems impacted in the school at the same time.

Change in the school has been equated with learning because you won't change without learning something. There has been a total change in the welfare, curriculum, organisation and culture. The result for the school was that in 1998 we were awarded a Director General's Award for School Achievement in Student Welfare, Curriculum and Organisation.

Tina Barnier

When I came to Blacktown Boys'one of the jobs that John charged me with was having a look at boys' culture. By then there had been 18 months of work by John. It was quite clear that there needed to be reculturing of the school. Further to that, the existing culture was based on a very limited definition of masculinity. That limited definition revolved around a sport icon and was deliberately exclusive. So we had 14 or 15 quite happy students and the rest of them were feeling pretty left out, depressed and disengaged with their school. The research that we have relied on a lot is the work by Pam Gilbert and Noel Alloway called 'Boys and Literacy'. Their definition of masculinity is that it is culturally structured through a number of social practices. The dominant social practice at our school, which was defining this limited masculinity, was engagement in sport. So we wanted to try and broaden the definition of masculinity without completely taking that away from the school. We also wanted to improve the learning outcomes for the students.

The key issues we looked at were; the welfare system that existed, the current curriculum and the school organisation as it stood. We knew that we had to change the structure of what happened in the school and what was happening in relationships. The What, the How and the Who all had to change. After the quality assurance review, John was brave enough to lead the school through the process of developing a values and belief statement, which might also be called a vision statement. This was the defining framework for decision making in our school that was collaborative including the stakeholders of the school, the parents, the students and the teachers. The questions asked were; 'What is it that we want the boys to be?' and 'What is it that we want from them by the end of the time that they have with us?' They are challenging questions and it fulfilled that part of the change process of raising people's awareness and signalling that there was going to be change.

Now I'll look at some of the existing culture of Blacktown Boys'High, which you might be able to identify as issues in your school, and what we did to replace those. So we'll look at the four elements of teaching and learning, curriculum, welfare and school organisation, and how we re-cultured them to have the school that we have today.

Teaching and learning was defined by its passive nature. It was very bookish. We discovered, through analysis of the school and the faculty budgets that the faculties were spending between 75-95% of their budget just on textbooks. Teaching was to make kids compliant. The outcome of that teaching was mark competition. There was not even cursory attention to outcomes in education. Reporting was about marks and grades. Then behaviour comments such as 'your son is a nice boy or not so nice boy', which their parents already knew. The curriculum was very limited in its choice. The hours for the school certificate were not adhered to and most students spent the greatest amount of time either in industrial arts or PE.

The one difference in that structure was visual arts, which had increasing numbers of boys taking the subject and highly successful HSC and School Certificate outcomes. Curriculum and teaching in this subject demonstrated that we can make changes in boys lives if we are not afraid to use the curriculum to address the issues that they are interested in. What the head teacher in that faculty was able to do was let the boys use the issues that interest them to develop their art works. She used the curriculum to provide solace for students and also to engage in issues that they are vitally interested in, such as personal isolation, the development of their own masculinity, and conflict.

The school organisation was very traditional. We had very short learning periods and lots of movement which gave someone enough time to plan who they were going to belt in between lessons and also to get out on to the playground to settle a few scores.

Staff meetings tended to be ad-hoc and didn't deal with any training and development issues but rather drains and toilets. So the school organisation was not responding in any way to the needs of the boys.

Now we are taking apart this old culture and replacing it with a new. We needed to get teachers who were not engaged in this to come on board and see the need for change. Gathering data is the way to go, because eventually it becomes very clear to teachers what we are trying to do is make their job easier not harder.

When we looked at teaching and learning we had a major campaign which continues today on literacy training for teachers. We took teachers out for whole days and trained them in small cross-faculty groups in the writing modules, which are available from the disadvantaged schools program. We have got a talented and gifted program, we had a support teacher who was wonderful. We used the English Language and Literacy Assessment to support it. We went outcomes based reporting and we used technology to support that process.

With regard to the curriculum we greatly broadened the offerings to the students and we adhered to the hours. For the welfare system we have a modified Glasser system with its basis of negotiation and power with the boys rather than power over the boys. The system emphasises the ownership of classroom problems, with both the teacher and the student, who work out and contract through the problem.

Because training and development budgets are so minimal, we changed all of our staff meetings to training and development opportunities. So what happens is that we have our meetings in the morning which start at 8.15am and they continue until about 9.30am and the boys come in later that day. All those meetings are designated training and development. We also have longer learning times and vertical structures within the school such as the house system to accommodate what boys need. They were some of the things that we have done with regard to installing a new culture.

Ian Beasley

What structures do we have now and how do these impact on boys in a positive way? What I will do is talk about teaching, learning and communication as it impacts positively on boys.

The vertical curriculum structures in stage 5 have allowed boys to have greater choice of courses and it hasn't cost any more in staff resources. In fact, this year we have greater choices for boys and fewer staff teaching those electives. It also means that boys can choose the courses that they want. There has been an increase in music, agriculture, art and language options for boys. They can also make changes at the end of a hundred hours of a course. This means that they can obtain more skills over a greater number of courses. As far as teaching and learning is concerned, the vertical structure has moved teachers back to having a look at their program. Now with the mix that they have in classes, they have students who have already completed a hundred hours and students that have only just started in that particular course. So, how do they teach a group where some have already obtained some/all the skills and some haven't? They have had to re-think how they are going to present those teaching and learning programs in class and they have had to look at their teaching strategies. That may mean that they have got to employ more group work; they have to use students already skilled as mentors in their class; they may have to change and rotate the topics they teach. All of these strategies are good for the boys.

Assessment and Reporting

There are now three components to assessment and reporting that staff have to consider in their programming. The reports are outcome based so the teachers have to look at how they are going to assess skills and to identify those skills as they are planning for their lessons. The second part is the literacy component. They have to assess the boys on literacy components in all key learning areas and faculties, and these have now also got to be included in plans. So we have a situation where we are forcing the issue with teachers now because of those two assessment components. The other way we also are assessing boys on is their adherence to the school code, which looks at areas such as learning, respect and safety. So teachers also have to incorporate this in their learning programs. If they are going to comment on how often the student does their homework, then they have to set the homework and they have to mark it. If they assess them on other aspects of the code they have got to make sure that they know how the boys perform in those particular areas. So boys gain positive outcomes because of their assessment initiatives and there is more communication between boys and teachers.

The longer learning modules also mean the teachers have to think about the way they present material. They have to structure their lessons so that the lessons incorporate different strategies within the lessons. We have asked teachers who traditionally have longer teaching times and have different ways of structuring lessons to train the staff who have not had that sort of background.

Communication has now improved greatly through a variety of ways. With our Glasser-based welfare system students are encouraged to communicate and resolve conflicts through negotiation with their classroom teachers. Staff are also expected to communicate with the boys. If they are going to negotiate with them they have got to be able to communicate with them. Communication is also promoted through roll calls/classes. We are setting up a pastoral type of system there, where teachers have to communicate everything from daily notices right up to very important issues. We support the staff by making sure they have the training through the staff meetings so that there is a consistent approach on what the school considers very important whole school issues. The outcomes based assessing and reporting means that staff are now communicating with the boys and their parents. The literacy components also aid communication. Students are encouraged to talk, they are encouraged to write, and they are encouraged to express themselves generally in a wider context than they have in the past. These are the positive outcomes for the boys.

Bill Campbell - Biography

Bill has worked at Uralla Central School (NSW) as Head Teacher English/History for the past two years. His previous teaching experience has included Oxley High School, Walgett High School and Drummoyne Boys High School. Over the past few years he has been a member of the NSW Governments 'Education Policy Committee'. Bill has also worked with the policy advisers for the NSW Minister for Education, John Aquilina. He is currently a facilitator on gender equity issues in the Armidale District.

Bill is married with four children and quite unintentionally established a gender balance of two boys and two girls. Interests include antiques, playing touch football and the study and teaching of the Law.

Bill Campbell - Raising the Self-Esteem of Boys through Skill Development

Discipline and Bullying

One of the things that we've heard of lately is the idea of a 'hands off' policy in relation to preventing fights and bullying in schools. I think my first encounter with that was in another life-time when I was working on an oil rig in the North Sea. Because I am not six foot eight, when I was working on a drilling crew I am eternally grateful they had a 'hands off' policy there. Some of the guys I worked with were so tough they would make Dirty Harry put his gun back in the holster. So working in an enclosed environment of 250 guys and constant hassle, twelve-hour shifts, started to make me think about what these guys were like when they were on shore. What was their biggest worry, their biggest concern in life?

One small example springs to mind. Their biggest obsession was the size of their penis. They sent money off to this address in London they had found in a porn magazine to buy a penis enlarger, and of course, the money disappeared. It ran into hundreds of pounds and nothing came back, nothing. But I know it is a great fund-raiser. And the guy who was in the greatest danger on that rig was actually smaller than me, but he was built like a draught horse, and I will leave the rest to your imagination.

A key element in being put on an oil rig, was that you had to be able to work in isolation. Now because Australia was the end of the earth and I had grown up on a property, I went to the top of the queue. But I also found when I got on the rig, that there were a lot of people who had done time in jail. They put them up pretty high because they could survive in isolation. I was okay until I got promoted and then one of the guys I had to mix with and direct was a fellow who had just done three years for gouging a guy's eye out with a beer glass. He just done his time so I treated him with a great deal of respect.

So when you start to move into the school environment, you wonder, has really that much changed in terms of the hands off policies and related issues? What does it mean? What I will try to do in this session, is run through a few strategies I have picked up at a lot of schools. Things that I can assure you worked and are still working, so hopefully I can share some of these areas with you.

I have two sons and two daughters, so I have vested interest at home and at work, in understanding boys' and girls' relationships. Part of my teaching career where I have been slotted in, is with the sort of kids who were aiming for top of the state results. And then a lot of the work was also with the kids that were regarded as the roughies, and being able to connect with them as well. Maybe there is some sort of joining of the areas there that we can look at too.

I started talking to classes where I asked, 'Why is it that a lot of the kids achieving the top results were girls?' This was mixed sex classes and a bit of a clue came with the girls who were able to clearly articulate things like - that they wanted professional careers, they wanted mobility to be able to move in and out of a career at some point in the future. Girls of sixteen, seventeen, or eighteen already factored in the idea of moving in and out of the workforce. They knew that if they placed themselves into a position where they had careers like solicitors and things like that (strange very few mentioned teaching), they were able to come in and out of the workforce as an option. Whereas with the guys I just didn't encounter that sort of factoring in long term planning, and I think that's one of the clues that I was picking up. Another area that was mentioned to me is the fact that leadership in the school was overwhelmingly the females. If you want something done through the SRC you ask the girls to do it. Right, so how do you change things or what do you do?

Leadership and Self Esteem

I suppose the other area, which I will try to come to later on, is the over proportion of boys in the bottom classes. I was often asked to go to and 'try to teach those animals something'. That was the sort of comments I would get about those boys. The clincher for this school came when the year 12 boy captain gave the school an enormous payout at the end of year speeches, with all the parents there. Afterwards the principal said 'fix it, I never want this to happen again'.

What he meant was vet their speeches, don't just read them, write them if you have to, never let it happen again. What other staff members were telling me was needed was, to change the way a lot of the guys presented themselves in public, the public image of the school. I also found that the guys want to be able to do things properly. If you think of the different football codes, have you noticed when they come off the field these days, they articulate what the game was like. We used to think that these people were absolute boofheads, but then they were actually taught to do this. And that is one of the things that you can easily use to connect with kids. If you say, now we need to make sure you are prepared, and the kids will nod they will say 'yes". If I am going to get up and talk at the assembly, I want to be able to do it properly. They don't want to stuff it up.

So we'll move from thinking of leadership to thinking about self-esteem. One of the things you notice where the year advisers call for volunteers, is that the boys won't. They just step back, don't look at you. A technique I used, was to say to the year advisers, select the guy you think can do it to start, just to get it running. And this was a different thing altogether. As soon as you say to a boy ' you have been asked', they want to know 'who asked', and if you tell them 'so and so thought you would do a good job'. They think 'Oh well that is interesting. Okay I will have a go'. Note: These ideas apply to girls in many cases with similar needs.

Providing Frameworks

But the next thing is don't set them up to fail. If they feel they have been selected, that's a big plus. They are more likely to agree to go along. But you have to do the groundwork and make sure they know who they are addressing and how to address the audience. So you could even teach them formal meeting procedure, the type of audience they are confronting and give them a quick run through. If you just simply say, quick you are out here, come out and speak, that's not fair. As adults we are not comfortable doing this, and students need to be prepared. To build self esteem, if you find there is a weakness with speaking or public presentation, boys and leadership in the school, target the leader to start with. In any school, whatever age group, you need to select, invite, don't just say volunteer. Then you need to set them up to succeed, prepare them and you can do that, it is not difficult.

There's a technique I use even with kids that you can see are totally incapable of giving a speech or putting a sentence together. Too often giving a speech means reading. But this is not giving the kids a chance to channel their energy into almost paragraphing their speech in the brain.

Build a Story Technique

I'm going to get you to do this very simple technique together. Just give me a topic, any topic. ' Dogs', okay, our topic is dogs. If you work with the kids that are probably very self-conscious or the very weaker end of any school structure, chances are you will get your shopping list approach. They'll say there are all sorts of dogs. There are greyhounds, blue heelers, and they rattle through it. So what you can say is, that you want to build a story. I am only giving you each five words, but tell me a story about a dog. I don't want five dogs names. I don't want Rusty, Ben or Snipper, but I want you to tell me a story about a dog. See if you can do it, and what you need is five quick reference points. If you need some help, I will start off with a suggestion. One of our first dogs is a blue heeler called Atilla. First, what does he look like? Second word is incident. What is the incident? Here's an example. There was a really wild kid and this kid had done over several shops in town and one day when he was doing over a shop with Atilla, five police arrived. Now Atilla circled the car and not one cop would get out of the car, while Atilla was circling. So that's an incident. Next one might be children. Atilla was always very protective of kids. Right, next word, might be eventual death. How did he meet his end? It could be running out on the road, that sort of thing. So you got five key areas for a story built around a dog.

You see what I am saying, you set them up so that the kids know the ground rules and they can all do it. Then you can ask them to perform. You have got those five reminders, if you get lost you come back to them and it is safe. This works at any level. I have done it with little tiny tots right through to year 12 and often the year 12 students are the hardest because they are often the most self conscious. They find it the most awkward.

Leadership for Life

What we are establishing so far is a whole school thing in trying to build leadership. It is no good just saying pick the brighter kids. Everyone has a right to do this, to lift their skills. The reality for most of the students I would deal with is that they move to the larger cities and they need to feel that they can move and survive. Students need these kind of leadership skills to feel that they can move into a foreign environment. It is quite daunting for country students to move to other cities and survive. They have to take risks and ask themselves, does it cost, does it hurt to be able to set yourself up and have a go. One student said to me 'I am heading for Sydney, I am looking for work and I'm scared'. It will take some guts and he'll need to work through some simple steps. Where are you staying, you just don't hit the streets and say, oh I will find somewhere eventually. So work that out. He was staying with a relative, he said. But how am I going to find work? I said well I know you have got more front than Grace Brothers so I suggest that you walk around and ask. And he did. At 18, he walked straight into an insurance company and said 'I am so and so from Tamworth and I want a job'. And the answer was, 'well congratulations that is a fair step that you have come six hours or so down here looking for work, we have probably got something for you.' And he was amazed that it was that easy. It can be this easy. But it was a confidence thing, not a skill thing at that stage. So that is what I am trying to hit, a lot of it is a confidence not just whether they can do all the jobs.

Mentoring

I was asked to talk on mentor schemes. When I was teaching in the school of over a thousand, a couple of suicides really jarred me. A student wrote me a suicide note when he blew his head off after the HSC. He wrote something to the effect that he expected ninety plus and he got seventy or something like that. But the thing is, he didn't tell anyone and often boys find it hard to open up. There were no links with people to say he was going through a rough patch or anything like that. And it strikes me, the girls were more inclined to seek advice or assistance. But I think a mentor scheme should be part of your whole school plan. There might be just as many girls that feel isolated, so a mentor scheme is useful to a large number of students in a year. Whatever the school structure, if you have got year advisers, nobody gets enough time. Whereas with a mentor scheme with volunteers from both ends, staff and students, you have a structure for those that need it. You have got one teacher allocated to maybe one or two, or even up to five students. That sort of system means that then you have got a lot more of your students that can just simply know where to go for help. That is a big thing. I think it needs to be voluntary and a simple structure. The more formal a meeting, for example, saying yes every Thursday we meet for an hour or half an hour, the less likelihood it will work. Alternatively, very simple structure might be just touching base, "how are things are going?", when you see them about in the school is often all it takes. Now some might only need that, but others might need a hell of a lot more support. Then you can go and seek the other support structures in the school. They may let their mentor know about a problem, and a lot of kids do want that avenue, but they don't feel comfortable in going towards what they see as the hierarchy without the help of a mentor. There is a lot of merit in that structure. Students may seek help with emotional, financial or literacy problems.

Surveys

One of the things that I would suggest strongly is to survey. Survey your students to identify if there is a need. Now I will just talk about the results of a survey that we did. One of the things that still staggers me is the number of students who indicated they were working a thirty five hour week. Now think about that, a thirty five hour week in addition to full time study for Year 12 or the senior year. So when you start to think about that, no wonder they find that they are trying to squeeze too much in. When you go through the hours of the week, their commitments with sport or other areas, like they might be looking after things on the home front, that's when you pick up the interesting areas. I was part of a government inquiry into a school's disastrous HSC results. I won't identify the school, but the results were shocking. The thing that stood out in terms of the need for a mentor structure was this. The whole of virtually every family of the senior students had lost it. What was happening in the homes, was that there was no dad in any family that we interviewed, and the mums had lost it as well. Nearly all of them were on some form of medication and had just given up. The boys were hitting the streets, cruising and being the tough, cool gang. The only ones that had it together in those homes were the older girls and often it was being put on their shoulders, young shoulders at the age of 14 where they were often carrying two or three or four other kids. Now that probably says something about our society and how things become dysfunctional, but it is also sending us some signals, that maybe we need to be building some other support structures. If you don't ask, you don't find out. Often the kids aren't going to admit that level of need. So warning bells went off within the department as far as what was needed with some structures like mentoring.

Angry Young Men

Another area is 'the angry young men' area and this subject is close to my heart. The frustration with them around our place is the 'Texas walk', when they cruise in the class as slowly as possible but packing up five minutes early is never a problem. You know, they can get out so damn quick it is not funny. But not wanting to go in is certainly a problem area. Angry students are often students with learning difficulties. One of the things that you do, is create an environment where all the staff support the students, so that they are able to take risks without someone having a laugh or paying them out. If you look closely at your school curriculum, you will probably see that with the learning difficulty students, the material is pitched so dam low that it would bore the socks off them. So I am saying put it higher, just as an experiment. I'd give them more difficult reading material initially and then ease back. A very simple tactic is, if a student only ever produces a third of a page of work, in a low keyed way put your initial at the bottom of the page, and say 'see if you can hit the bottom with your work'.

There is a great series called Penguin Classics and they are graded classics. There is Robinson Crusoe, Tom Sawyer and all the rest of them through to Braveheart and a range of more contemporary things have that have been released. You can move the kids through far more interesting reading material rather than just the most boring, lowest common denominator reading material

Confrontation is a big issue with some of these boys. A lot of the screaming matches occur with kids that are frustrated over their learning. Another suggestion is to have all staff use non-verbal cues. I've got a series of them and all the kids know them now. I have ones for on your bike and time out. You get to sense when a kid is about to boil over. I get them to give me a sign. And if they go like that, I just nod and a quick note off to the Aboriginal aide or the counsellor or whatever, because those kids will always out-shout you if you get into a fight. Some kids have been used to shouting at home and they have had years of practice. But the non-verbal stuff tones things down. It tones the tension of a room down to where you start to use each other's signals.

Case Studies E

Broadening Boys' Options

Cheryl Hallinan

Engaging Fathers and the Whole Community in the Education of Rural Boys

James White

The Role of the Principal in Facilitating Change in the Curriculum and School Culture

John McKenna

Individual Programs for Disaffected Boys

Cheryl Hallinan - Biography

Cheryl has been a teacher and educational administrator for 25 years in a wide range of schools in South Western Sydney and Newcastle. In mid life she took a sea change from the coast and doctoral studies at Sydney University to the bush, rediscovering her hippy 70's bottling and bread making abilities along the way.

She is currently the Principal of a rural K to 12 Central School of 350 students situated in a town of 660 population.

Current professional interests are: technology in rural education, integration in isolated schools, creative and performing arts programming, gifted education, literacy and boys' education initiatives.

Cheryl Hallinan - Engaging Fathers and the Whole Community in the Education of Rural Boys

Cheryl is the Principal of a central school in rural NSW. The school is a K to 12 school and there are 350 pupils.

The reasons at our school for getting moving on boys' education are exactly the same as everyone else's and the statistics are actually the same as well. I'm in a middle class community in the bush, in a rice growing area. All our results were on the average or better. Yet, when we really went into our evidence we found that we had a group of under performing, under achieving male students. Surprise, surprise they also linked up with behaviour referrals.

Non completion of the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate was higher for us than most because we're in a situation where there are not enough workers for the jobs available. We have no unemployment in my town of 660 and my shire of 2,800. That is mainly because we have a mill, we have a large chicken processing plant and we have intensive farming that sees our farmers doing one crop straight after the next. They've just got the rice in, they're now waiting for a little bit of rain to put the wheat in and then it will be canola. So it's a three-crop year. It's flat out. There's a lot of driving and there's a lot of side work keeping machinery going when it's used that much throughout the year.

As well as academic issues, dangerous behaviour is a major problem and rural youth suicide is very high. It most likely relates to the level within the homosexual community. Those kids have no where to go, they have no role models. If they stay in their towns we are finding more and more that they are the children that get drunk, drive into trees and have terrible accidents. But whether it is an accident is another issue of course. So we have a major problem with atypical behaviours of boys not being recognised or acknowledged.

We have a huge problem with alcohol use and marijuana. Our district has high levels of arrests for possession, sale and growing.

The Boys Program

The boys' program basically comes down to a series of things that we're doing. The program runs through a male teacher mentoring identifying students. We have students moving in and out of our schools, as many city schools have too. Ours come and go with the rural timetable. They come for crops, they go up to Queensland, have a bit of a holiday, they come back down. We have children moving in and out so it's really essential that we have early identification both of literacy and numeracy problems but also of emotional needs and other aspects particularly dealing with boys.

We use individual education programs (IEP) for a number of our kids. We do it by means of folders. All the kids in the class have the same sort of folders with their work in it, but some kids have different work inside their folders when they're working in that subject.

We also use a tutoring program for teachers, which basically means me, the principal, and the head teachers coming in and working with kids in the classroom. My head teachers generally work a 30-35 period week by doing this tutorial system as well. But it's a way of working with first year out teachers and inculcating them in the rights of students and their attitudes to kids so that we don't get that rudeness to children. But it really hits our head teachers and it hits myself as principal. I don't have a deputy and I've got 350 kids. That's bigger than most country high schools but that's the way of central schools.

Involving Fathers and Father Figures

The involvement of fathers and father figures is obviously a hot potato and I know in many city schools there often isn't a father around. We find father figures for our identified kids. That can be the local Anglican priest who is an ex-chalky and is a wonder. But we also use members of staff, we use members of the school council, we use fire fighters on the bush fire brigade. They're really good, the community services blokes, and we use the APEX and the Lions. We use them as father figures for our kids.

We have strategies to involve fathers. The blokes where I am from don't particularly like me ringing them and asking them to do things because I'm a sheila. So I have a really good couple of male teachers on staff, they're the ones that actually make the contact and the follow through. I have a terrific young fourth year out phys-ed guy who does a great deal of the ringing of parents. He can talk to fathers on a very much man-to-man basis. He does it in my office while I am there so I'm aware of what the discussion is about. Using the speakerphone I can hear what the father is saying, but he is in charge of the discussion.

Our aim this year has been to have a father or father figure at every meeting with any of our targeted kids. That means any positive meeting and also any negative meeting, any behaviour meeting. We've succeeded with that. Sometimes the father's not physically present. Sometimes he's on the end of a bad phone out on the farm, or on the sheep station and we're in the office with the kid and a speakerphone. The speakerphone is a way of the dad's being in here and us saying, 'Well there is a meeting going on'. The kids will always tell us that dad's too busy so mum's got to come. We're not circumventing mum and leaving her out of the loop, but a lot of our boys would much prefer us to deal with mum who will not pass that information on to their fathers. We think it's absolutely essential that some sort of relationship with dad be built. But that includes, in particular, the positives as well as the negatives.

We do joint planning of what's going to happen with the boy, how we can support him, what his needs are. We explain the special IEP to the fathers and we have them involved, but not actively involved on a day to day basis, because our dads work much too hard and much too long to do that. But we hope to make contact on a weekly basis with each of these dads to see how their sons are going at home. Whether it be homework or at work experience. For many of these boys homework is not applicable.

Another aspect is a parental planning meeting. We have year meetings with our parents. We only have between 35-40 kids in a year group, so we're quite able to have those sorts of meetings. If we put something solid on the parents will turn up, we've found now. But it does take personal phone calls and invites. So when newsletters don't work, letters don't work, you've got to have a telephone tree to ring and get them in.

At a parent's suggestion, we have instituted active monitoring and evaluation by the school council, not by us, because a lot of these people don't trust schoolies, but they do trust the evaluation of their own. We've responded to their request in targeting crisis times in our area. Our kids spent a lot of time driving auger bins and trucks and things during harvest. At that time we altered our homework procedures. Homework dropped for that period. We acknowledge their needs but it goes back with a vengeance later. Likewise we have many holidays taken in the middle of the year. When the wheat is in, a lot of our families go on holidays at that time because there is no other time. They tend to work right through the Christmas and Easter period in particular. So we target units of work prepared that we can just take off the shelf and give to those kids at that time.

Education is seen by the school and community to be important and also of course the dads are there on holidays with them so while they're fishing or whatever they're doing, we're expecting dad to monitor that. It's been going okay so far.

Vocational education is an important focus. I was there in the late sixties with the feminist movement too and we've had lots of female role models into schools. But the reality is we need to get the male employees and employers in. We've just started setting up two videos to tape ex-pupils who turn up in town. Many of our successful role models leave town. If you go through school and you do well, you go to university, you don't ever return, you're gone for good. So when they come back to see us or come back for a twenty first or whatever, we have to grab the kid, video them and we can then use that in the educational setting through school.

One boy I convinced to be a male model, which is a worry for a country boy, but he, was a hot looking bloke. He became a male model, did drama at university, ended up being a technician doing sound and lighting stuff. He came back to tell his physics teacher that the physics I made him do in Year 12 has been the most valuable thing he's ever learnt for his work in theatre, for working in lighting and sound. The teacher felt much better but we wanted to get that on tape because you'll never get it again.

Like everyone else we've had a huge review of resources and sequences. An active learning focus is expected in every unit of work that every high school teacher does. Explicit outcomes with student self-assessment has been in for the last year and that's been really, really good with kids doing their own self-assessment. They are very silly at first but they become quite sensible. The parents look forward to the ten weekly self-assessment that the kids do the main part of, but the teachers also comment on.

A Woman Leader

The first issue for me was to be responsive to the staff and student and community concerns. The real push came up through my experience of boys. I've got four boys of my own ranging in age from 33 down to nine years old. That gives me a bit of experience. But I sometimes have a group of parents who blame us for their boy's bad behaviour every time. "It's your fault. What are you doing? You can't whip em, in my day they got caned, we could do something about them."

I had a hot and bothered P&C meeting and a school council meeting. A group of parents, the first time all mothers, the second time mums with their husbands dragged in. I took the initiative and said 'Righto, I'm glad you're all here, thank you for coming along. Yes, we've got a problem with our boys and I want you to help me. I'm going to ask you from now on every time we get a boy in, I want one of you dads to get off the tractor, get out of the office, leave whatever you're doing and come in and help your boy. It's so important.' The fathers were very shocked and stepped back from that but it was too good an opportunity to lose.

We've got to acknowledge and be sensitive to specific issues of gender roles. Depression is an issue amongst boys who have problems with their gender assignment and where their sexuality is taking them, and that's a group in our school. It's a very small group, but a group that I am very concerned about. With one of those boys I actually managed to get him into a school in Melbourne where he can live a different sort of life than he can live here. I'm sure he would not be alive if we didn't have him there. He was a gifted computer person with very straight laced, evangelical parents and he could not express himself in any way. He needed to get out of our small town - it was literally killing him.

Changes for Boys Support Girls

We also have to be aware of the needs of the girls in town and the changes we're making for boys are going to lead to a great difference for girls, particularly girls in rural Australia. But the difference has to happen across the whole community. Unlike the move for girls' education that happened back in the late 70's and early eighties, that came out of a push from the general community, I think in boys' education we're really almost ahead of the community. If we're getting flack and if it is a hot potato it's because we're taking up the action on behalf of the kids whom we care about and love a great deal.

There's a huge challenge presented to the harm-minimisation programs that we're putting in and that involves drug education but it also involves alcohol abuse. It means driving, it means safety, OH&S issues. We train all our kids on the OH&S Program. We do back care with all of them, girls and boys. We do what we can to job ready our kids but also to make them as safe as we possibly can in a society that is very high-risk taking.

Challenging Prevailing Attitudes

Our attitudes about drinking in particular, and it is the land of the long neck home bottler where we live, is a real problem. We're really challenging a lot of very dangerous behaviour and I've got rapped over the knuckles for that in the past. Last year we had two Year 8 students carted off to hospital with alcoholic poisoning, a girl and a boy. I spoke about it on assembly, just in terms of how much we cared for the kids and that really we have some bad examples in town in our community and that young people aren't allowed to drink because they tend to drink to get drunk. And while there are some bad examples around they have to learn how to use alcohol wisely in any society and that we were really concerned for them. So binge drinking is such a danger. Out of that I had two children removed from the school. I had district superintendents calling; I had ministerials out of that little statement on assembly. So they are some real challenges. We're challenging some of the beliefs and long term behaviours and it's a minefield for a leader.

Lastly, there's a huge perceived threat in my community from the educated male. In our community they are happy for their girls to go off to university. Our kids achieve very highly. Last year the top university entrants index was 98.45, the year before it was in the 97's. And persistently we have kids in that area. Our annual report shows it. We have some quite exceptional children and we have some wonderful teaching going on. Our classes are very small. In the high school we have two groups in most years, two classes in most years. Year 9/10 we run vertically in all their subjects including Maths, English and Science. The end result of that is that our students do well.

Our senior classes are about six in number. They do very, very well but they never return and that's a fear. Some of our brightest boys are pulled out at Year 10 and put on the farm. They do a real traineeship where the parents can claim part of the salary for training them but they don't go off to do their training at a college. They don't do accredited courses that would lead to other things in the future, and that is a major concern. So, we are pushing completing education, and trying to make it the norm to go on to Year 12, is a real issue for our parents. There isn't the employment for professionals in town. We do need a new doctor coming up. Our two are getting pretty old now. So I'd be happy to train one of those up. But they really are concerned about that and they don't like to see their boys go. If we're doing a good job the kids stay at the school. If we're not they're wealthy enough to go off to private schools. They also live distant enough to be able to get a large subsidy from the government to go to one of the cheaper private schools. So my numbers are real line-ball as far as how well we're going.

In particular years when we've had problems, we've had two or three boys in a bad peer group sent off to boarding school as punishment. It's a very sad thing for a parent to send a child away when they're in difficulty and one of those children suicided. So I don't want that to happen to my boys. I want them to be able to live in their community and do as well as they possibly can. But the challenges in leadership when you're really bucking a whole cultural change there and you need to take your school council, your P&C and all with you to do that.

James White - Biography

James has been involved in education for the past 24 years. He is currently the Principal of Manilla Central School - an innovative rural school with over 400 students from K to 12. He has also worked as a regional curriculum consultant in the Technological and Applied Studies KLA. Prior to his appointment as Principal he was the training and development/curriculum coordinator for the Armidale district office.

In 1996 James completed a Masters degree with educational leadership as his main area of study. His current emphasis on school improvement is based on the belief that effective change requires effective leadership. Some of the initiatives that he has implemented at Manilla have already produced positive results with increased enrolments, reduced truancy and improved student performance.

James White - The Role of the Principal in Facilitating Change in the Curriculum and School Culture

I'm James White and I'm going to talk about the principal's role in leadership for boys. I'm going to talk about changing the options for boys. The principal is the person working on the solution of a problem or else is part of the problem. I like to think that I'm still operating in that top half. The problem is that our boys are under-performing. You can tell me a dozen different indicators of that. They don't achieve the best results, they leave school early, they're the ones that are getting suspended, and they're the ones in trouble. Well, that was the case. We had a crack at doing a few things to change that. Let me tell you about them.

Two examples

The first boy is Sam. Our school is a central school with four hundred students from K to 12. Sam was in Year 6 last year. He's in Year 7 in our high school this year. This is his story. There are four boys in the family. It's a great family with a good mum and dad who are very supportive. At swimming carnival time - eight races, eight school records smashed, done! At district carnival - eight races, eight wins and a record smashed! At the state carnival, the week before last - a third and placings in six finals. There's been no swimming pool open in Manila for the last six or seven weeks, so you can imagine his training. He's done this here in the bush.

Last week was the band camp. Sam spent four days at band camp preparing to be part of the central school's concert band. Our school has a concert band that goes from primary through into the secondary. He is part of it. Now that's great too. But here's the one that got me most. In the state schools we have the English Language Literacy Assessment Tests in Year 7 and 8 and Sam's results came back earlier this week. I rang his parents to say congratulations. Sam is in the top 5% of the state in every area. Now something has got to be happening right in my school for that kid to achieve in all those areas. Let's jump across to the next example.

John comes from a split family with a lot of problems in the family situation. Last year John was in Year 7. He missed almost 50% of the year (almost one hundred days of school). We had home school liaison officers chasing him down but he didn't want to be there. We looked at strategies. What can we do to get this boy back on board in our school and learning? John doesn't engage well with literacy. He's intellectually moderate (IQ < 80) and he gets support. We were fortunate enough to have a very supportive district office who put together a program to access something like $200,000.00 for Aboriginal education programs in the district schools.

Both Sam and John happen to be Aboriginal. So this Aboriginal initiative, with all this funding, provided the opportunity to employ a teacher to write the programs, to change the curriculum that would encourage John to be at school. So far this year he's getting up towards 80% attendance. And the best part of the program hasn't even started yet. That is taking him out of the normal stream classes along with half a dozen other disenfranchised boys and putting them in an alternative program. A program that John can link with. We're out there in the bush. Manila is up in the north of the state. It's pig-chasing country, where most boys have a dream about owning a pig dog even as much as they want a car. The pig dog comes first. So the course we're talking about has things on dogs: breeding, training, raising, and working with dogs. We also have a section on poultry and we have our own agriculture set-up in the school. These are all things that John can lock into and learn from.

Change the Curriculum

I said we had the band. We're a small school. In what other school can you go abseiling every week as normal school sport? They can also go horse riding and fishing. Make sport more interesting and appropriate for all children. In fact, change the curriculum to make it more interesting.

We have four vocational education subjects that are along the pathways that boys want to do, as well as some of our girls. They're into rural industries. We offer hospitality. We have more boys taking it than girls. We have the new information technology course running. These are some of the initiatives together with my curriculum team we needed to look at, to make the changes happen in our school.

Risks

Our boys are from the bush. They're risk takers. And the bigger the risk you take the higher the perceived rank in that pecking order. What's out there for them? We're out there in the drug world too. Drug taking is risk taking, and driving cars fast, and alcohol. All of those things are there and we're competing as a school with those things. We want to save our boys from them. We're not going to help them by having a school encouraging them to go on with the same sort of behaviour that the community might see as being acceptable. We want to change those behaviours. One of the targets for 1999 is gender equity because this is about boys and girls, or at least in my school it is.

Research

As a principal what's going on in your school? How do you know? You must do the research. But you can make statistics say what you want. Be very careful when you get all these statistics in from your school that you're not getting a false reading. We had an interesting one the other day. We found a very high correlation between the students not wearing uniforms and unsatisfactory class performance. The next question asked was 'Is that a socioeconomic problem?' Those that can't afford it, don't wear uniforms and don't perform. We also examined suspensions, attendance truancy, whether it was illness or other reasons, and subject selections in Years 7 to 12. What were the boys taking? Where were the boys dropping out and could we change those subjects to make them more appealing?

Who was being recognised on presentation days? In my previous job I had the pleasure of going around twenty or thirty different schools and going to their presentation days and shaking the hands of 80% of the girls in the schools. They are the ones up there getting recognised, getting the awards. You have a look next time, who gets the awards in your school? Who gets recognised?

We directly surveyed our students. We looked at post school destinations and we published that material again in our annual report. It's a great document if you use it effectively. Other indicators we looked at were, who was accessing the school counsellor? Were there a disproportionate number of boys? How many attempted suicides had there been? How many students were talking about it, because that's one of the big indicators. And we found out lots of interesting things.

The Role of the Principal

Okay what do I do about it? I'm the principal, how am I going to change it? I'll tell you coming in as a new principal to a school is a great thing to make change happen, because the staff didn't know me, and neither did the students. And I walked in with one message. I have high expectations of everyone, the staff and every student in my school. I want you all as staff to have high expectations, because if you haven't, there is no student in our school that can achieve past mediocrity- or go to the very best, unless they are personally very, very motivated. It's our job to motivate and get them there. Don't accept second best.

Celebrate achievement but make sure it's genuine. Catch them getting it right. Be out in the playground, be in the classrooms, and be talking with teachers. And I'm not just talking about students getting it right. I'm talking about catching your staff and letting them know. They don't get enough feedback in our system. They go along for twenty-five years and in the NSW Department of Education and Training they give you a certificate after twenty-five years! That's if you let them know that you've reached that period of time in the service. Twenty-five years and that's the first time you get a pat on the back? Staff and students they need it, boys especially.

Positive Role Models

There is one male teacher out of fourteen in our primary school. What do we do? I asked my head teacher of Science in the secondary could he develop a program of across school teaching with another school half a mile away. So he started teaching Science to the primary students. I think part of the results that we're getting now, are a result of the work that he did last year with those primary students that are now feeding up into the high school. The transition isn't near as fierce for them. Break down the barriers in curriculum structures.

Last year I was coaching both the boys and the girls open touch teams in state competition. As a principal and being busy this was difficult so I called in some helpers. But rather than go and grab a dad to help with boy's team, I got one of the mums who happened to be a state player. She's a brilliant coach. We got all the way to the state final.

Recognition of Achievement and Personal Bests

Talk to kids about them achieving their personal best. Don't compare them to the rest of the class. Compare them to their own achievement, it's so important.

Teacher Involvement

I'll quote Jerry Walsh, one of my staff. He's a beautiful man. Jerry is well over 50 years old and has a fantastic relationship with students. He cares. He comes up to me, 'Mr White, I just want to tell you about Brian.' Brian is a kid that I had suspended three or four times last year and has lots of problems. He said, 'Brian has been doing a wonderful job helping coach this primary basketball team and he is a good role model to those kids down there.' (This is in the playground away from everyone else). Brian's chest is out like this, he's strutting the stuff. He's proud. That kid has not been in any major trouble this year, and part of it is due to the positive influence that one teacher, Jerry Walsh, has had through his high expectations and recognising student achievement.

As principal, you're instrumental in conducting the research that is both quantitative and qualitative, so that you can use that data or you can turn that data into information. All of the data is there in your school. It hasn't been turned into information. Select staff to be catalysts for change and provide them with support. Establish the necessary guidelines and resources to allow issues to be addressed in curriculum patterns, school organisation, community involvement and teaching and learning. Finally be the leading role model for both staff and students.

John McKenna - Biography

John is one of two Deputy Principals at St Bernard's College, Essendon in Victoria. His interest in boys' education issues stems from his experience teaching in single-sex boys' schools for over 25 years. St Bernard's caters for 1100 students on the one site. During his time at St. Bernard's College, many changes have occurred for the wellbeing and educational benefit of the students. The most significant of these changes would be the creation of a dual-campus structure on the one site. Before coming to St. Bernard's over 3 years ago, John was Senior Master and Director of Campus at Parade College in Bundoora, Victoria, a school which has over 1500 boys on the roll.

In the mid 90's, John spent three years as a member of the Christian Brothers' Education Commission and in that role was one of the organising committee for a symposium. It was jointly sponsored by the Catholic Education Office, Melbourne and the Christian Brothers' Education Commission, called 'Celebrating the Education of Boys in Catholic Schools' in July of 1996. John has four children and his youngest, Daniel, will be joining him at St. Bernard's next year, being part of the new intake of students for Year 7.

John McKenna - Individual Programs for Disaffected Boys

I'm John McKenna from St Bernards College in Essendon, Victoria. I'm here to share something of a program we have for boys around about the Year 10 level who aren't doing all that well at school, the disaffected minority who aren't achieving. We found that this is a great program. I don't run this program, I wasn't one of the people who devised it but I know it works.

We're a single sex school, a boys' school with about 1150 students. When I first came to St Bernards four years ago, the thing that struck me were boys everywhere, boys all physical, all on top of each other, buildings closely aligned to each other, boys everywhere. There was a lot of bullying, a lot of the problems that people see typically in all boys' schools. We had a high level of staff frustration and low morale. VCE results weren't all that great and the boys setting the tone were the boys who are the disaffected ones. The boys who really wanted to learn found it very difficult to do so in the classroom situation. There was a lack of focus. There was no culture of study around the place. Being new into the place and being a deputy principal there I was pretty keen, with a few of the others, to change the culture.

This program which we call the 'AGERE' Program was only one of a number of responses we made to these problems. We didn't think that this was going to solve all the world's problems. We thought we would focus on the Year 10 level because we decided that these boys going into VCE were the ones that were really are most in need.

We were attempting some other things at the same time. At the Year 9 level we were really thinking seriously of an alternative curriculum, a camp-site if you like, to get the Year 9's out of the way. Possibly in the future the Year 7's and 8's also being a separate entity in terms of curriculum and the staff. We were compartmentalising the school.

The major change that helped this program work was when we decided on dual campus structure and more or less created two schools of six hundred. We felt that then we could tackle the problems of bullying and other things. Another highlight was an award system was introduced with major prizes for those boys who contributed to school spirit. At the same time as looking at what we can do for the boys that are disaffected, by looking at our discipline policies to get the disaffected on side, we were also very keen to reward those kids that really wanted to be part of the school.

The Program

So we had a variety of responses to our problems, but the one that I want to talk about today is this particular program, the 'AGERE' program. We wanted a program that was able to get the students involved in what they were doing. We wanted to give them a bit of self direction, a bit of self motivation. We used the ideas of Steve Biddulph who emphasises vigor and movement and doing things. A lot of these boys that weren't doing well, had been sitting in the classrooms for three or four years and feeling really frustrated because they needed to do something that to them was relevant. So we wanted a program that was able to do that. We also wanted a program that was able to involve them and make sure that they knew about how they were going at any particular time. It involved constant debriefing, challenging them and have high staff to student ratio so that they could see significant male role models there with them everyday.

Typical responses that they would give in the past when they were under pressure were 'left the book at home' or 'I don't know what happened to my homework'. The idea was having somebody who knew the family, knew them, knew all the tricks they were likely to get up to, had all the spare books and pencils and everything there and could anticipate these sorts of things. We've got significant models in their life working with them most of the day.

The Thinking Behind the Project

We looked at Bob Connell' research on the production of masculinity. We used this to develop our program by replacing confrontational disciplinary systems and restructuring physical education to emphasize participation rather than competitive selection. The boys' individual freedom means that they're accountable and that they're responsible. We're looking at their competition being directed towards their career paths. We decided that rather than say 'No, no, we shouldn't be using boy's natural competitiveness' we would try and change it from being a physical sort of competitiveness to something to do with their future and career. We wanted the boys to be able to think 'I'll be proud to talk to others about how well I'm going achieving that'.

We identified the boys in Year 9 that we felt needed a program such as this. We ran an assembly for all the prospective Year 10 students, for subject selection and we explained the course to all of the Year 9s. Then we gave a handout to all interested students to see if there were enough students. In the first year of operation we had to tap a few people on the shoulder and say 'we think this program will suit you', because it was untested, untried waters and a few needed a bit of a push. There were twenty-four places in the program.

We certainly found that the parents had to be assured that they weren't cutting off their options. We had to make sure that in all our information and our handouts to parents, boys still had the option to come back into VCE units, Year 11 and 12 units later on. The core part of this whole thing then was a series of individual interviews with students, parents and the program coordinators. At that, they certainly made it clear that this wasn't an easy option for these boys. It was explained that they'd be removed from mainstream classes and they'd be working on their own in a small tight group but if anything the work would be more difficult, be more demanding, it would be longer hours. They really had to show a commitment to the program before they were accepted. So even though we were struggling for numbers first off we knew the boys that we wanted to be in this program. We had to make sure that they realised it was a privilege to be in it. It was something that was really going to be good for them. We were building a culture around the program.

We took some information about boys from Steve Biddulph. Boys need to know what the rules are before they will commit to something. Part of the interview process was to say to the boys, that they need to know what the rules of the program are, who's the boss, who's the person in charge and the two people involved. They had to know that the consequences of not living up to those rules after a semester would be that they were dropped out of the program. So it wasn't something that was an easy option that they had the privilege of then continuing to stumble along in.

The Program in Practice

There were twenty-four participants and two staff at the Year 10 level in 1998. The following year a number of those continued on in the program and so we ended up with forty-four students and three staff in the second year.

The students study Year 10 core subjects and specialist subjects that are provided by the specialist team of the two staff involved. We had a portable that was used for the boys. It was their own portable. Nobody else used it. In it they had a fax, they had a mobile and these two teachers taught there when the boys weren't out doing other things. Then the second tier were other relevant useful conventional Year 10 subjects that couldn't be provided by the team but were negotiated with the other teachers on staff. So some of the boys for example were able to do core Year 10 Maths or English in some of the classes but most of the subjects, the team was able to provide. If they weren't able to provide some specialist thing the boy wanted to do, then they went back to the specialist teacher. Then you had some relevant outside provided TAFE courses, some vocational education course that the boy got into that would have been negotiated one day a week or half a day a week.

We had one boy interested in an immediate building apprenticeship, others professional waiter, computer graphics designer. Seventeen were interested in something to do with the building industry, like carpentry. We had a fighter pilot in there, a chef. We had boys with all sorts of unrealistic expectations as well as those that realised there was something they could get into.

Two days per week, the boys had permanent work placement, one day a week in a TAFE course, and two days in class at school. The timetable for these boys had to be an individual one. The timetable at school in their portable was a logistical nightmare but they were able to work it out. The course staff had to repeat a lot of sessions. So one of the implications for leadership was in staffing. We had to find people who were full bore, who were ready and able to repeat lessons, chase up kids and keep going over stuff.

We're trying to give maximum freedom to the boys but it was very difficult when some of them had expectations that weren't terribly realistic and so no relevant course applied. We had to group them together. Some of them weren't terribly happy with that, but they were happy to be out of the conventional classroom and to be given a lot more say in what they were doing. The students had to remain committed to the program for at least a semester so that it was structurally possible to timetable it.

Up to 80% of the time was still at school, even if they did get an outside agency. So you weren't in buses tripping these kids back and forwards all the time wasting your time. The focus for every student is their individual occupational interest and in finding out as much as possible about it by the end of Year 10. It was really a strong focus on where they were going and what they wanted to do themselves. Now a lot of them changed their minds after they'd had that experience. So we saw that as a practical help to them. All students had to pass Year 9 to be admitted, so they had the incentive to get into the program. They'd heard about it last year that they had to pass everything and continue to push themselves in Year 9 to be part of it.

Problems and Solutions

Some problems have surfaced now in our third year with the program. One of the problems was that the Year 11 group, the initial group in Year 10 continued on in the program. This strained the space and staffing resources and we needed to hire a third teacher. They're still trying to get into the same portables. So it's a strain on the resources and we'd be hoping that some of them certainly find their educational place outside the school and move on. A couple dropped back into VCE subjects. One of our problems was that some of them went back to the old habits, when they did not have the support of just the core couple of teachers working with them all day. They went back to not getting work in on time and making all sorts of excuses for their own inadequacies with a number of teachers.

Summary

In 1998 the Year 10 program had twenty- four students and two full time staff. Some of our educational objectives were to build self-esteem, to help them with their own motivation, build up their own organisational skills and to help them mature socially. They're mixing with the adult world, they're out there and they're not playing the games they may well have been playing for years with staff in schools that just won't work at TAFE or in the workplace.

The features of the program are a limited number of teachers for the group, limited movement and close checking by staff. The staff provided monitoring and constant feedback to the students. There was one particular period in each day, called a negotiation and research skills period. It was really to sit them down and say well what's going on and keep feeding back how they're going.

The Implications for Management

Everything has to do with staffing, getting the right people to drive this, the people with enthusiasm, motivation, people who want to go the extra mile. We needed a good blend, a good team group. We were lucky with our two. We had one that could see the big picture, and had plenty of contacts with TAFEs and Vocational Education Institutions and so on. And we had the other guy who was quite into the detail. One could take most of the sciences and maths side and the other one could teach most the humanities and commerce subjects. So they complimented each other really well. And the other thing I'd say is we had to let them go and go with it and make mistakes because it certainly was a risky sort of enterprise at the start and we were putting in a lot of resources. It worked very well in that first year.

In 1999 we had the Year 11s and so we had a strain on resources. Realistically, it was only limited VCE options for these boys that moved on. They couldn't really come back into our full VCE even though we said to the parents that we were leaving the options open. I suppose to be brutal about it they wouldn't have made it into much in to VCE, the way they were anyway. So we were putting all our eggs in the one basket and channeling in a certain way. The door was still open but those that went back into the VCE had only limited choices.

So we're looking now at probably replicating the Year 10 program again in Year 11. We're going to run a similar sort of program in Year 11, rather than thinking that most of them are going to go back into VCE. We certainly have to look at our staffing requirements and perhaps instead of having threes Indians, to have maybe a chief of the whole thing that runs the whole show and a person in charge of looking for suitable staff.

It's certainly a very risky enterprise particularly when other sections of the school or other programs would be screaming for resources. You have to justify putting so many resources into a small number of boys. Financially you've got to be smart, you've got to be able to do it without anybody else missing out. I'd hope that in doing this we're looking at the broad view. People might comment that it's only a small group, but the implications for us at school have been that with these boys taken out of the classes, then the ones left in the class now get a much better go at being able to focus and concentrate and do well. Our VCE results have been better since the program started. Not just because of this program but there's no doubt that this program has helped in the process of boys been far more focused at the senior end of the school. Things are changing and evolving as we speak. I don't know what the program will look like this time next year but being flexible and being able to adapt to things as they happen is probably a great quality there. And finally being creative in solving some of these problems that are starting to happen.

There is a video the boys have made and they go through their own perceptions of how this process works and it is interesting that they're saying all the things that we hoped they would say at the start. They felt there was more freedom. They felt that they were empowered to do things themselves, that they're mixing with adults and they feel important. These were the same kids that I was teaching in Year 8 and Year 9 the year before who had their head on the desk and didn't want to pull it up to work. They were looking out the window and playing all the little tricks to say, 'I'm bored, I'm frustrated here and I don't know where I'm going'. These are the same kids now who are proud of their school and part of the process and we think that the program has worked pretty well for them.

Case Studies F
Building Support

Shona McKinlay

School, Community and Regional Support

Andrew Mullins

Supporting Fathers to be Good Fathers

Phil Bretherton

Fathers' Role in Quality Learning for Boys

Shona McKinlay - Biography

Shona attended Newcastle College of Advanced Education (Newcastle CAE) back in 1978 - 1980 and graduated as a Secondary Physical Education teacher. She had a great time in Newcastle as a young college student - apparently the railway police are still looking for her.

After working in the bank for four months (at that time there was a glut of teachers) she moved to Queensland to take up a teaching position at Ingham SHS (North Qld). Then she moved to Beaudesert SHS (south east corner) to foolishly 'follow her heart'. She's received a promotion to HPE Subject Master in Mount Isa and stayed there for almost seven years-long enough to get married, have one of her two children and begin external study for her Bachelor of Education, Administrative Leadership.

A move to Gladstone on the coast didn't last long (long enough to have her second child - a boy) as a promotion to Deputy Principal at Maryborough SHS eventuated. She's been in Maryborough since 1995 as Deputy Principal and at times Acting Principal.

She is currently Acting Principal at Hervey Bay SHS.

While Deputy Principal at Maryborough SHS she decided to do something about boys.

Shona McKinlay - School, Community and Regional Support

In addressing what we have done at Maryborough State High School I would like to recount a journey which started with me as Deputy Principal-Student Welfare. I didn't really think that this was the best of the deputy jobs because it meant my days were filled with dealing with the kids who were behaviour problems or just didn't fit in and this just happened to be boys. I'm not even sure I liked these boys that much.

The other part of the journey began with having a 'boy child', and realising with a great thump back to earth that he was very different to my first born, a girl child. My husband and I had thought we were the perfect parents until Rory turned up and started mixing socially with other boys.

I therefore identified a need to address issues with boys both as a parent and a Deputy Principal. What I am here to talk about however, is how I approached these issues at Maryborough State High School and to cover what culminated in the schoolwide adoption of the 'Pathway to Quality'. The move was evolutionary and not revolutionary with the school finally moving toward our vision this year - initially without me at the helm, very exciting.

The strategies took us from the local context, to a district level, then state and then back to the district and school level. So here we go:

- In 1996 I responded to local and global issues after reading some shocking articles in professional journals about boys. As Deputy Principal-Student Welfare I was also well aware of boys' involvement levels in:
    - behaviour management interventions
    - literacy support programs

  - harassment issues
  - lower academic achievement/recognition, this was particularly obvious to the community at Speech Night

- I identified that I wanted better outcomes for boys and therefore girls, as my philosophy centred around the fact that if our boys weren't disrupting or violent, then the girls (and other boys) had to benefit. So I set about trying to understand the underlying issues and promote these in the school community:
  - I began extensive research and gathered information from a variety of sources. There wasn't much information around in the Queensland Equity Branch as boys didn't seem to be on the agenda there.
  - After collating some information, I wrote a series of three articles about the issues related to boys, in the school newsletter. These articles introduced statistics about a range of issues relating to school as well as physical health/harm. To spread the word further I produced media articles for the local press.
- I then initiated the formation of a school committee (staff and parents) and together:
  - we developed a statement of purpose, goals and an action plan.
  - we developed and utilised a variety of avenues to gather, compile, analyse and report data eg. survey/research. Outcomes from the survey made us go back to the drawing board as we had initially thought (backed up by some research) that high profile role models (such as sports stars) were very important to boys, this had implications for our meagre budget of $1,000. The survey showed overwhelmingly that boys at Maryborough State High School thought their fathers, brothers, uncles and friends were highly important as role models.

This team was promoted both within the school and through the newsletter by reporting the outcomes of meetings, surveys etc. We developed the confidence of staff through sharing information and discussions at staff meetings. Teachers were able to collectively shape our future by having direct input into our direction.

By this stage the Maryborough State High School Boys in Education Committee decided to develop a strategic plan to address the issues identified. Being Deputy I was able to ensure time off, funding and administrative assistance required to have three full day meetings with the team which resulted in the production of our strategic plan. (This is presented in full through the Maryborough State High School Boys in Education web site).

We had each summarised the relevant facts from articles we had researched and through a lot of discussion and whiteboard erasing we came up with an extensive list of ideas/propositions. We were smart enough at that time (and I look back on the document with a small amount of surprise), to begin with an 'approach philosophy' which centred around the need for a shared philosophy to bring about change. We said that we knew that discreet projects would assist movement toward change but alone would not bring about significant change. How true this philosophy turned out to be.

We approached a range of staff who had expressed interest or who we believed should take on some of the initiatives. We then completed and presented our strategic report which contained expected outcomes, strategies, time lines, people responsible and checklists for monitoring implementation.

Boys and Books

This is a reading program which was established to get boys enjoying reading in a different way. Volunteer (or even coerced) boys from Maryborough State High School were trained in the 'Support a Reader' program. They then went across the road and worked with at risk readers in the lower grades of the Primary School. The secondary boys involved were not necessarily great readers but they were able to help the Grade 2 or 3 kids with their reading.

Big Brother Program

This project addressed two needs within the school. Firstly, Year 11 boys were missing out on leadership positions because of the 'community service' criteria in our merit-based selection for prefects. They needed opportunities to be community minded. Secondly, Year 8 boys found the transition from Primary to Secondary School a little daunting.

A Year 11 student teamed up with a Year 8 boy according to their interest/hobbies; they then had to develop a plan of activities after going through getting to know you exercises. This program was monitored throughout the year by the coordinating teachers who also took the boys through a range of activities.

Critical Literacy Inservice

Professional development for teachers based on the Pam Gilbert and Nola Alloway Kit which we were trialling.

Formation of the Fraser District Boys in Education Group (FDBIEG)

The Maryborough State High School Committee felt a need to collaborate with our feeder schools and the wider community. We formed a district group of parents and staff which had strong support. I promoted the group's goals throughout the district and promoted activities in the media and through the Maryborough State High School web site.

To 'pitch' or launch our strategies to the school community at the beginning of 1997, we employed and promoted an outside expert (Rollo Browne) to address the community, in a public meeting and the school staff, through a staff development activity.

Thus began our implementation.

It was really coincidental that at our community launch, many of the parents present expressed concerns about male relationships and linked these relationship problems to the statistics that had been presented. The mainly female audience asked Rollo for answers of what to do about relationships and he said 'Choice Theory'.

This is where I get to the coincidence - I had just finished personal training in Choice Theory and Reality Therapy and I admit to being persuaded and enrolled. Rollo's statement, although he didn't know it, was more than affirmation of my feelings, it confirmed the need for cultural change to take place in the school and now I had the tool to make it happen.

By this stage we had a strong foundation with:

- high level community support
- media promotion

- district and school groups working toward similar goals
- activities within the school, and
- a huge amount of interest from across the state

Because of this interest, I decided to develop the Maryborough State High School Boys in Education Website, as I was sick of photocopying the strategic plan and posting it around the state. A Year 11 computer whizz tried to educate me in the development of the site but eventually gave up and he developed it himself.

Whilst still promoting Boys in Education projects I had shared my beliefs and knowledge of Choice Theory with staff involved in the committee. I encouraged them and eventually funded their Choice Theory training.

This small group met regularly and with a shared philosophy and enthusiasm we became the Qualiteam. We were initially committed to improving relationships and practices in classrooms and to actively take responsibility for meeting student needs, including success.

Again as Deputy, I was able to create conditions which allowed us to develop a professional cohesiveness:

- time to meet and talk
- team planning times and venues
- formal work projects/activities
- communication structures and autonomy (power)

The result of this was a decision to develop the 'Pathway to Quality'.

The Boys in Education strategies although successful were high energy / low yield projects (we weren't working effectively). So in 1998:

- The FDBIEG chose to pursue an awareness raising venture - a highly popular State Conference - Boys Can Do Better. There was a huge amount of interest in the conference, we had to close registrations quite early on with over 300 participants. This was due to the high interest in the topic, a shortage of resources in schools and also the high quality of presenters including Richard Fletcher.

In line with our philosophy to include parents, we also organised a community meeting on the evening prior to the conference and this attracted a huge audience as well.

This project basically covered the FDBIEG for 1998.

- In 1998 the Maryborough State High School Committee (who were also in the FDBIEG) decided to maintain some strategies in more effective ways. It had been difficult to enlist staff to maintain their levels of involvement as we got a new set of boys each year and many people felt that it was a merry-go-round. We had to get smarter and did so in the following ways:
    - including Boys and Books in the Year 9 Social Science 'Learning for Living' curriculum
    - Big Brother Program took a new path guided by the Year 8 Coordinator
    - Pursue the 'Pathway to Quality' with a philosophy based on Choice Theory and Quality Schools concepts, an outcomes driven model. The philosophy and content of these ideas seemed to match my understanding of the emotions and goals of staff.

Both group projects still required high level commitment, team-work and promotional strategies but didn't require the high level of energy concentrated on so few people:

- The FDBIEG was responsible for channelling committee efforts toward our shared goal. As a result of the conference, strong professional communities across Queensland are now able to support both boys and girls.
- At Maryborough State High School, through the Pathway to Quality campaign, I encouraged and supported teachers and administrators to take risks and try new techniques and ideas which addressed issues which were concerning them. I provided discussion papers, guest speakers, visits to other schools, professional development and feedback at staff meetings. Reticent staff trusted my judgment enough to take a leap from the traditional to a new 'wild' idea. The core group (Qualiteam) developed shared values and beliefs, based on the assumption that all students can learn. We planned to build a strong professional community by providing staff inservice which would see staff work from a common philosophy.

To date at least 70 staff have voluntarily undergone Choice Theory training. We meet and talk about our use of Choice Theory in the classroom and we support each other in our collective focus. Staff have taken the responsibility to communicate and improve our understanding through the production of a newsletter, weekly lunchtime chats, monthly professional development and head of department discussions.

Students also undergo training in Choice Theory, namely, Year 8, 9 and 12 students. Choice Theory intensive training for students requiring behavioural intervention along with their parents was also initiated last year. Very positive results were reported by the Year 8 Coordinator and the volunteer teachers who took the sessions.

The parent body also received training through monthly parent forums called Us and Them discussion forums which I developed and delivered for over a year with the help of district office staff. This reached a small but appreciative audience.

As a result of the combined focus, the whole staff, the parent body and the School Council support Boys in Education initiatives, the Choice Theory philosophy and the focus on quality through the inclusion of strategies into the Partnership Agreement. This then translated into the School Annual Operational Report and Subject Area Action Plans.

This sees the progression from initial programs to a cultural shift which permeates through to the operational functions of the whole school operation.

Maryborough State High School has continued its focus over the past term in my absence and the men in the FDBIEG now have the confidence and motivation to take on leadership roles in this group.

Leadership Issues:

Me female, you male. There were no problems with the relationships, being the only female was quite nice for me. But being the only female and being the Deputy meant that I was looked to, to lead, be secretary, produce, get afternoon teas organised etc. It took a lot of time to delegate these chores - to enrol the men to take responsibility and a leadership role. Probably more to do with being the Deputy than being a woman.

Across school cultural change - evolution not revolution, influence and persuade, not do and tell. Let people have input and set the direction after providing information which helps set a knowledge base.

Promote widely, using information that will reach and hit your audience where it hurts:

teachers - behaviour management / literacy

parents - deaths / accidents / academic achievement

girls / partners - violence / jail

Outcomes:

- created teams who share philosophies, teamwork and the workload
- increased school, community, global awareness of issues related to boys
- co-ordinated highly successful state conference and community meetings
- promote primary/secondary links to improve student learning outcomes
- developed web site
- released publications of best practice for sale
- Boys in Education strategies included in the Partnership Agreement
- staff support
- higher profile/awareness of boys issues
- student understanding of Choice Theory
- boys success (parents comment to me after Speech Night that there are more boys receiving prizes each year)
- parent discussion forums
- range of strategies for boys, parents and staff

- known theme in the school 'Boys can Do Better' - stickers, newsletter, conference

Andrew Mullins - Biography

Prior to an appointment in 1995 as Headmaster, Andrew was responsible for mentoring and parent support programs at Redfield and was one of the founding teachers of the College. For the previous seven years he had taught English and Drama at Bidwill, Pittwater, and Sydney Technical High Schools. He has five years' experience as a residential tutor in a university college, and a long background of involvement in youth work.

Andrew Mullins - Supporting Fathers to be Good Fathers

Schools can help parents be better parents. I'm going to talk now about our experience in working with parents and,in particular, working with fathers at Redfield College, a 2-12 independent boys' school in the north of Sydney.

There are many opinions we've heard over the last few days, not only about working with parents, but whether or not schools should work with parents. Well I'm certainly of the mind that we ought to work with parents if we can. Don Edgar this morning spoke of partnerships with parents and I was very enthusiastic about what he was saying. Redfield is one model of how a school can support parents. There are many other approaches but this is one model that has led to success.

My school started as the initiative of parents. We opened our doors in1986 and our aim was twofold: to create a very successful academic school (because we figured we'd better shut our doors if we couldn't do that); and secondly, to provide as much support as we could for parents. Parents come to us looking for a school that will give them as much support as possible, in values through staff example, active mentoring and so on. I will touch on these topics as I talk.

The effectiveness of fathers has been questioned in some literature. You might have read some prominent articles in the last six or twelve months about The Nurture Assumption, a book that's come out of the United States. The point of that book is to say that the peer group is more influential then parents. That is a little scary, and while it's partly the angle of the book to draw publicity, I don't think it has to be that way. What we can try to do as educators is to make sure that we reflect parent's values in the schools and to ensure that those other inputs which are in our control in the school reflect the parents' values as much as possible. So my policy at school for example is not to put a book on the shelves in the library which I think the great majority of parents in the school wouldn't be happy having on their own home shelves. Sometimes that clashes with what does happen in other schools. I know because I taught in five other schools. But I think it's quite important as educators that we realise we are given our duty by parents and we don't have a right to usurp the moral education of the children in our care.

There is also current literature suggesting that boys raised in a single parent family, or without their father present, show no longitudinal disadvantage compared with the normal group. I dispute that as a general rule, and many studies show just the opposite. Yet there can be little doubt that parents, and fathers in particular, can be very ineffective at this present time. There is an urgent need to increase the effectiveness of fathers.

The underlying principles of our work with fathers.

1. The great part of character development should take part in the home. Programs which ignore this are somehow usurping parental rights and, in any case, are likely to be ineffective.
2. To better educate boys, we need to facilitate the effectiveness of fathers. "If you want to be the father of a good boy, be a good father."
3. Much time and effort needs to be dedicated into working with fathers. (We find that the results are forthcoming ... a culture is developed and a positive peer group amongst the fathers is established which facilitates the work of the school.)
4. We have to be very "receptive" as fathers, open to doing our job better. And in fact what the father would not wish to be the best father he can be? But the reality is that many fathers lack the experience, the knowhow and the requisite skills to do their job very well.

Let me illustrate the first point I raise. The draft Federal Strategy for Drug Education, which has been put out in the last couple of months, has created an Advisory National Committee which is made up of maybe twenty people, and, at least in the draft version, that Advisory Committee had no dedicated parental representative. I couldn't believe it! How are we educating kids despite the family? Most character development, at least in theory, takes place in the home. The question we should be asking is What can we do to reinforce the work of parents?

A further example. So much effort to help prevent teenage suicide is addressed at the adolescent level, but not at the early intervention level. Yet that would seem the logical place at which we could have a long term impact on the statistics and on turning the whole thing around. What can we do to help parents, of younger children particularly, raise resilient children, children with greater self control, greater optimism before difficulties, and with better problem solving skills?

To educate boys we need to facilitate the effectiveness of fathers. Several years ago now I went on a study trip to Europe. I visited schools working very closely with parents. I met there a very sick teacher, an elderly man who had a debilitating illness. He had a lot of wisdom about him and the morning I left he gave me this note which he felt summed up everything he wanted to tell me about education. It said:

Tell the parents, tell the fathers at Redfield, if you want to be the father of a good boy, be a good father. At Redfield we repeat this message in many different ways. You can't expect the kids, the boys, to be the best people they can be if we adults who are their examples, the parents and the teachers, aren't trying to be the best people we can be.

Much time and effort needs to be dedicated to working with fathers. We put a lot of work into this at my school and we have a member of staff who is in charge of parental programs.

We can't underestimate the fourth point. What makes my school different from many is that we already have very receptive fathers. A culture has been established. Applicants come to the school looking for this. I'd suggest one way of implementing some of these things in your own schools, if they appeal to you, is to start to run up that flag: 'we're a school where we try to give parenting support'. More and more you will bring in families that are looking for this. You can create a positive peer group amongst the parents as well as amongst the children.

My school has a number of structures already in place whereby we work closely to support parents. The most important one is a mentoring program. We work individually with the children and the mentor meets with each couple each term in a sit-down interview. It's very labour intensive but the principle beneath this is we want to make education as personal as possible.

Father-Son Camps, Mentoring and Parenting Talks

We have developed many specific approaches to giving input to fathers. In addition to the mentoring program, we hold father-son camps and various types of talks and seminars on parenting. We've had two father-son camps so far this year. The turn out was about 90% on the younger of the two camps. On the Years 5 and 6 camp the response was about 70%. On these camps there is specific input for the dads. A classic story from the last father-son camp. The theme for the camp was "pirates" so everyone dressed up with eyepatches and galahs on their shoulders. When one of the dads couldn't get his boy to go to bed at the right time, he said 'You tell him, you're a teacher.' It's interesting isn't it, what you learn about parents close to the action in a camp setting like that?

The mentoring program gives a number of our trained staff the opportunity to talk regularly and in depth with fathers about parenting in their family. For example, I remember one graphic example some time ago where a distraught mother rang me because her son had sworn at her in a fairly coarse sort of way. He was a Year 9 or Year 10 boy at the time. A few weeks before when I had been over at the family's house I had thought that the father, unintentionally, was too demanding with his wife. We were sitting around having a cup of coffee and the wrong cakes came out or something and he was fairly abrupt in the way that he spoke to his wife about it. After the phone call I went to see the father and I suggested to him that his son was mirroring the sort of behaviour he witnessed in his father... but in a far more exaggerated way. (Don't kids seem to do that? They pick up on an almost innocent fault in a parent, but for the child it becomes a veritable achilles heel.) He got the point. If we can get that message through, it can help the father to be much more attentive to the constant impact of his example in the home.

Each month I give a talk to the parents of the younger children in the school. At the school, we also hold regular parenting evenings, often featuring input by fellow parents. Getting fellow parents to give these sorts of things does require having prior planning evenings, gearing up the speakers, making suggestions for content and letting them put their own ideas and thoughts into it as well. What we're creating, or what we're seeking to create in the school, is a climate where all of the collective wisdom that we've gathered over these last fourteen years keeps getting recycled. So that more and more parents benefit from the experience of other parents. I say at the start of every year in the major parent function we have then 'Listen, everyone has strengths as a family and we want you to put your strengths into play here and learn from other people's strengths. So when you go on a father-son camp, if you are one of the dads, watch what the other dads do, how they interact with their children.

Some essential messages for fathers

Unity with one's wife. I have an active interest in reading classics and last year I came across a quote by Odysseus in Homer. He says, 'There is nothing better in this world than that a man and wife should be of one mind.' Isn't that beautiful? That was written three thousand years ago and yet when you read much of today's best parenting literature is saying the same thing. Of course single parents can raise their children well but it's harder, and it's not meant to be that way. Father and mother can be a tremendous reinforcement for each other. Their child will witness the love that, in turn, will give him or her stability in adult life. Time dedication. That means being home, and being concerned to be an example in everything one does. Readiness to teach right and wrong. I think that's an important one. I'll quote Homer again: Odysseus' son, Telemachus blurts out at one stage, 'Mother I'm no longer a child, I know the difference between right and wrong. 'This is what the Greeks thought. And today, it will certainly help a boy to plot the right course in life if he's got that sort of measure.

Sex education, I believe, is a very important task for dads. If a boy doesn't learn a positive attitude to sexuality from his father, then he'll learn it from somebody else and it won't be as positive. We educators don't do parents a favour when we run comprehensive sex education programs. Far better, I would say that we run comprehensive programs to prepare parents to talk to their own children. Otherwise some of the most intimate truths of a child's life are given by a virtual stranger and what potential for damage there is in this.

Readiness to ask a great deal. You've got to have affection and you got to have challenge for kids. And if you don't have both those things, if it's all affection or if it's all demand obviously you're going to fail.

Time is short, parents shouldn't do the thinking for their children. Virtues, good habits, are best learned early. When we teachers have a line into the parents of infants and primary so much the better. It's harder to do very much at the secondary level in terms of building habits. Sometimes you just have to shut the door on the messy room! Have fun as a family. Parents need to be happy and calm before life's challenges. Children must see that the values you're often talking about do make you happy. If dad always comes home whinging, why will his children want to adopt his values... they patently don't lead to happiness. We must model the values we want children to adopt. Conversely when children reject their parents's values, how often is this because the father and the mother were not finding happiness in those values? Require adolescents to think, and often to make their own decisions, rather than just tell them what to do. We've got to get them thinking when it's a relatively safe environment to do so, otherwise as adults they won't be ready to make sensible decisions. The parameters you set are to protect from moral and physical danger, and explain this is the case then within these boundaries give as much freedom of decision making as possible.

In conclusion, may I invite to contact me anyone who has a particular interest in providing parenting support through school networks to get in touch with me. I will be happy to share with you our own programs and resources.

Phil Bretherton - Biography

Phil is currently the Principal of St. Augustine's Primary School in Wodonga. Phil has been involved in school based education for the past twenty years. Previous to this, he has worked in both secondary and primary settings as a teacher. Phil also worked as a senior education officer for the Catholic Education Office in Bendigo for several years. His areas of responsibility included pastoral care, family-life education, disadvantaged schools program and integration/welfare issues. Phil has conducted numerous professional development activities with school staff and parents groups. Phil has supported schools in the development of vision and mission processes and worked extensively with school boards.

Phil is a licensed facilitator for the Covey Centre in Seven Habits and Principle Centred Leadership. His interest in boys' education came out of current studies in a Masters in Educational Leadership.

Phil is married to Jane and has two children Ellen (15) and Hannah (9).

Phil Bretherton - Fathers' Role in Quality Learning for Boys

As part of a recent Masters in Education unit called Leadership for Quality Learning, I decided to take a close look at how some gender equity issues were being addressed in my own school community. This was prompted by some anecdotal evidence that our boys were turning up in special reading classes at a higher rate than girls. What were the implications for our belief in quality learning for all?

Five key ingredients to quality learning are:

1. Students' outcomes provide direction for learning.
2. Learning and the individual learner are made the centrepiece of school life.
3. Teaching focuses on learning and teaching for understanding: a balance and variety of teaching strategies is achieved.
4. Learning and teaching shape and dictate school structures and organisation.
5. Learning and teaching practices mould leadership, management. (Dimmock, C. 1995, Quality Learning in *Educational Administration*, eds C. Evers & J. Chapman, Allen & Unwin, Sydney)

In reflecting upon these ingredients, the school community tried to identify where some of the quality learning may not have been taking place. To support our investigation we decided to research the literature on literacy and then find out if our school was a part of the problem identified in the statistics.

In 1999 the Australian Bureau of statistics released the following figures on Adult Literacy:

- 17.2% of adult male literacy skills were classified as 'good'
- 20.7% of adult female literacy skills were classified as 'good'
- 18.2% of adult male literacy skills were classified as 'very poor'
- 15.9% of adult literacy skills were classified as 'very poor'

The overall conclusion drawn by the ABS was that "only 19% of Australia's working-age population - about one in five - is able to cope with all the literacy demands of everyday life" (Source: ABS Bulletin 2/1/99).

We then compared this information with the available data from Professor Peter Hill's Early Literacy Research Project*. Hill's (1995) research pointed to some overall problems with literacy teaching, but more importantly, some particular problems with boys literacy acquisition and enjoyment of reading. The points to notice include:

- A lower entry level of literacy for beginning school boys than girls
- A clear falling off in boys reading performance at about Year 3 and 4 of primary school
- A further alarming fall in boys performance in reading in the transition years from primary to secondary school
- Poor performance in literacy by the end of year 3 in primary school clearly indicates little possibilities for any marked improvement for the rest of the child's school life. (This issue is also relevant for girls).

Some educators have suggested that this is literacy 'death sentence' for children by the middle of primary school. It further implies that remediation programs in secondary school are problematic. Further to Hill's research, there is strong evidence to suggest that schools should be able to achieve minimum literacy standards with all but about 2% of students. This 2% would have learning difficulties that may never be overcome. It sounds like we educators have an enormous amount of responsibility to lift our game in this area. It also means that policy makers will have to provide better resources where they are needed most, in the early years of primary schooling. We all know of course that current educational resourcing is clearly weighted towards senior secondary schooling and driven my HSC or VCE programs. This is despite the fact that the most capable and independent members of the school learning community are situated in senior classes.

How then can we proceed? If we start with student outcomes and we are arguing that literacy for all is an important learning issue, what are some of the areas that need to be tackled? At St. Augustine's we decided to look at the gender role modelling currently challenging the male role models within our school community. To this end we invited our dads, uncles, family friends (males only) to a discussion evening. A critical factor in this process is to make sure that the dads etc, actually receive the invitation. We asked the boys in our school to fill in the name of the man they would like to invite and give them the invitation personally.

St. Augustine's is a school of 196 families. We had 75 dads (males) turn up to talk about boys learning. I remarked to the men who turned up. 'We don't have a stripper and we don't have a barrel (keg). So what are all you blokes doing here?' We were delighted with the response because it gave us great heart to think that we had enough men who cared about their boys' literacy. On the night itself we presented some of the literacy statistics, which we believed our boys were a part of. We broke our dads into small groups and asked them to think about what type of men they wanted their boys to grow into? We then showed them some survey results from our own year 3-6, about 120 students in all. Their classroom teachers administered it on one afternoon. Basically we asked the students to identify from a list the things which helped or hindered their learning. Some of the results worth noting included:

- 58% of girls preferred to work alone rather than in small groups. This compared with 41% of boys.
- 62% of boys and 70% of girls said that reading helped their learning.
- 2% of boys compared to 13% of girls though that working with a friend was a distraction.
- 60% of both groups preferred not to work in whole class activities. e.g. chalking and talking.

After the small group discussions, we gathered feedback on any points worth noting. From this exercise we learned that many of our dads did not receive our school newsletter. The women usually read the newsletter, noted points of interest and placed it away or on the fridge well before dads got home. Some dads said that any note saying 'Dear Parent' really meant 'Dear Mum. We have since instigated special newsletters targeting the dads and highlight boxes on the newsletter for the attention of dads.

We decided with a small 'men's group' formed after the evening that there was a need to develop strategies to help dads and men feel at home in our primary school. We have many women helpers during the course of a week but very few dads. Upon reflection, we noted how school used to have mothers and fathers clubs. In the age of gender neutrality we joined these two groups into parents and friends groups. The result was men stopped coming to the P&F meetings, which they perceived were really mothers club meetings. Our dads told me they were not interested in the price of ice creams or whether children should wear shorts or not!

We also noted that our dads couldn't make our weekly assemblies to see their children because of the time of day. These events have since been moved to lunch times to enable any dads working locally to attend. Some other 'getting dads involved' strategies that have worked over the past twelve months have included.

- Father and children's breakfasts (very big turn up for brekkie from about 7.30am)
- Twilight dads BBQ meetings (at about 5.30 - 6.00pm)
- A men's book reading-discussion group (12 dads met for 8 weeks to work through Raising Boys by Steve Biddulph)
- Information gathering about how our men would like to be involved with our school. (This activity realised 22 suggestions for school involvement).

In the end we have encouraged our men to just be involved in even the smallest way. We do not mind if only 5 dads come to something or 50 as long as we keep extending the invitation, encouraging them to model an interest in their child's learning, especially reading.

* Professor Peter Hill can be contacted at The University of Melbourne on 03 93448201

THE MEN AND BOYS PROGRAM

The project is based in the **FAMILY ACTION CENTRE** at the University of Newcastle, NSW. The Family Action Centre delivers support programs to marginalised and transient families using staff co-ordinators and trained volunteers. Action research, dissemination of information at all levels and advocacy are core features of the Centre's activities. Since the Men and Boys Program was set up in 1996 (initially as The Men's Health Project), men's and boy's well being has become a broad community concern reaching into areas of education, juvenile justice, cancer screening, fathering and suicide. The three strands which make up the Men and Boys Program are :

The FatherCare Initiative - encouraging positive father involvement in communities
A major development in this work is the undertaking of a long term research project in ways to effectively engage fathers in early childhood services.

Young Male's Health - research, teaching and advocacy for better health among young men
As part of the WORKING WITH BOYS - BUILDING FINE MEN National Training Program, a three day training course is offered throughout Australia for counsellors, health and welfare workers. This course teachers skills of engaging young men singly or in groups to reflect on, and shape, their own positive identity as men and to develop behaviours accordingly.

Boyswork - working with schools and with boys to improve health and education outcomes
A number of seminars and training courses are offered for teachers, school administrators and parents on the development of boy-friendly schools. As part of the WORKING WITH BOYS - BUILDING FINE MEN National Training Program, a three day training course is offered throughout Australia for teachers. This skills-based course addresses classroom and whole-school strategies to improve boys' education.

Activities undertaken by the Men and Boys Program include:

Research
Research has been completed on men's health priorities, boys' needs, father's approaches to teaching driving, and men's behaviours in pharmacies. Research into boy's learning, schools responses to boys' needs and fathers' roles in schools is underway.

Conferences
Conferences on Leadership in Boys' Education and WORKING WITH BOYS - BUILDING FINE MEN have drawn international perspectives and local experience together. Participants have come form across Australia and New Zealand.

Resources
A range of practical classroom resources, including photograph sets, manuals, posters and books have been produced by the program. These resources are in use in schools throughout Australia and are in demand overseas.

Contact the Men and Boys Program on 02 49 21 8739 **(Phone)** 02 49 21 8686 (Fax)
Email fmrf@cc.newcastle.edu.au

When notices went out for the first ever national discussion of leadership in boys' education, the organisers were unsure if they could attract school principals away from their busy schedules. How wrong they were. As word of the forum spread the conference venue was filled to capacity and rooms were hired adjacent hotels. Principals came from all types of schools and from every region across Australia and New Zealand.

Steve Biddulph, Don Edgar and Richard Fletcher provided an overview of the developmental, educational and social needs of boys. Principals from several states presented their work with boys in primary and secondary schools from rural and urban settings.

The presentations over the two days were taped, transcribed and edited. They are collected here to provide a spectrum of practical work-in-progress with boys of all types. For the first time, school leaders (both male and female) have set out their role in ensuring a bright future for our boys and girls.

The Men and Boys Program of the Family Action Centre at The University of Newcastle has earned national recognition for its seminars in the area of boys' education. This book is part of their development of practical, appropriate resources to support educators in their important work.

The Family Action Centre
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